

## Make magical creatures

A guide to creating creature concepts in Photoshop, with YongSub Noh

## Illustrate scenes of epic proportions

Donovan Valdes is on hand to give you advice on painting a complex scene between two battling sides!

## Ubisoft character designer

Ubisoft lead character development artist, Xavier Etchepare talk's inspirations and experiences

# Beyond: Two Souls concept artist

Quantic Dream art director and concept artist, **Benoit Godde** chats to 2dartist before the release of *Beyond: Two Souls*...

## Painting sci-fi girls

Concept artist and character designer Clonerh Kimura's shares painting tricks for his image, *Journey*

## plus

- 10 of the best digital artworks
- Fantasy sketchbook of Mark A. Nelson
- Fungal villains
- + much more!





# Editor's Letter



**JESS SERJENT-TIPPING**  
Deputy Editor

## Welcome to the October 2013 issue of 2dartist magazine!

We love this month's awesome cover image by the incredibly talented Benoit Godde, who joins us this month for an interview. We caught up with the *Heavy Rain* and *Beyond: Two Souls* concept artist to find out a bit more about what makes him tick as an artist.

We are showcasing another eye catching sci-fi image in this month's project overview on page 084, in which Clonerh Kimura takes you through the steps he took to create this striking female as well as sharing industry advice along the way.

As ever, we also have loads of helpful tutorials and insightful articles from industry professionals for you to be inspired by. Enjoy!

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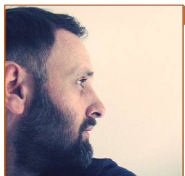
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### BENOIT GODDE

Benoit Godde is an experienced French art director/concept artist with professional knowledge of providing visual development for AAA next-gen game titles, films and commercials. Benoit is currently working on an unannounced AAA PS4 title at Quantic Dream, Paris.



### PAOLO PUGGIONI

Paolo Puggioni works as a lead concept artist at Jagex for a long-running MMO, as well as a freelance illustrator. Designing characters is a big part of his day-to-day job. What Paolo normally has to focus on is strong, easily readable silhouettes.



### XAVIER ETCHEPARE

Xavier Etchepare is a French polyvalent artist, who has worked on advertising, clips, audiovisual events, short films and video games for the past eight years. Xavier is currently in charge of visual character development at Ubisoft.



### DONOVAN VALDES

Donovan Valdes is a concept painter and illustrator, specializing in visual development and design. His credits include *Assassin's Creed*, *Prince of Persia*, and *Far Cry*. His art has been featured in various publications and exhibited at Ubisoft Headquarters in Paris, France.



### MARK A. NELSON

Mark A. Nelson is currently a freelancer, but has taught at Northern Illinois University and Madison Area Technical College, and has worked for clients such as Marvel, DC and Wizards of the Coast. He has also worked on the video games *Star Trek*, *Star Wars* and the *Doom* franchise for Raven Software and Pi Studios.



### CLONERH KIMURA

Clonerh Kimura is a concept artist and character designer, as well as occasionally a comic book colorist. He lives in Mexico City, and has been working in the animation and video game industry for the last five years.



### YONGSUB NOH

YongSub Noh is a self-taught, 3D animation artist from South Korea. He currently works for NCsoft and enjoys playing PC games, the drums and working on concept art in his spare time.

### WOULD YOU LIKE TO SUBMIT TO 2DARTIST?

We are always looking for tutorial artists, gallery submissions, potential interviewees, writers and more. For more information, please send a link to your work to: [jess@3dtotal.com](mailto:jess@3dtotal.com). We look forward to hearing from you!



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Subscriptions can be purchased via 2dartistmag.com. 12-month subscription – £23.99 (\$38.99 US approx.). To enquire about subscriptions, contact: support@3dtotal.com

#### Distribution

2dartist is an e-magazine distributed as a downloadable PDF and on digital newsstands.

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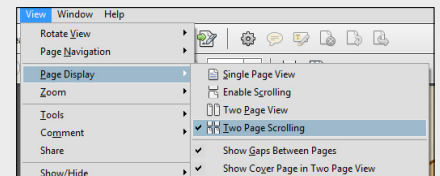
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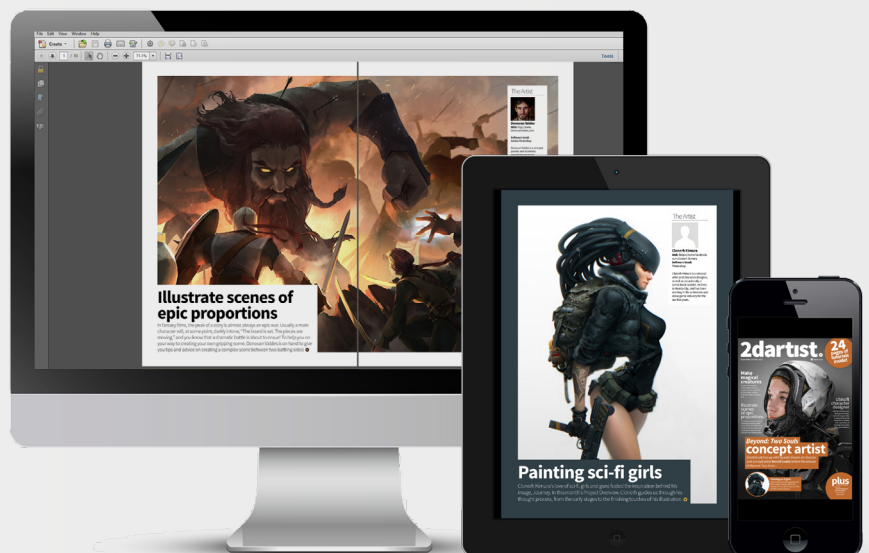
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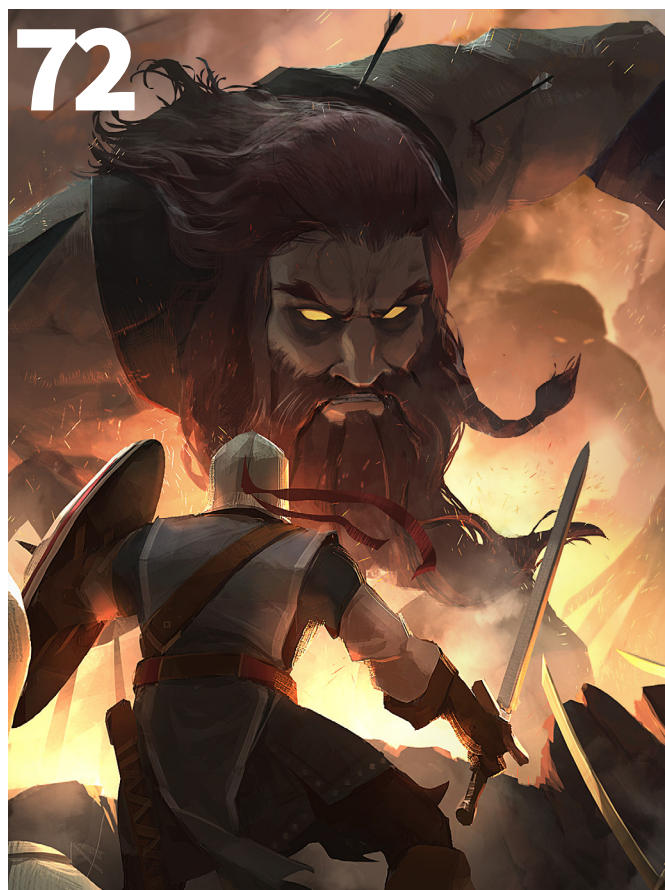
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## The Artist



**Benoit Godde**

**Web:** <http://www.porte-voix.com/>

**Interviewed by:**  
Jess Serjent-Tipping

Benoit Godde is an experienced French art director/concept artist with professional knowledge of providing visual development for AAA next-gen game titles, films, and commercials. Benoit is currently working on an unannounced AAA PS4 title at Quantic Dream, Paris.

# *Beyond: Two Souls* concept artist

Quantic Dream art director and concept artist, Benoit Godde has become known for his moody environments in *Heavy Rain*. 2dartist catches up with him before the release of *Beyond: Two Souls*... ▶



**Benoit Godde's career is a shining example of where hard work, perseverance and raw talent can get you. Each stepping stone has risen the bar that little bit higher, earned him that much more respect.**

**Now he works as an art director and freelance concept artist, working on such prestigious and award-winning titles as *Heavy Rain* and *La Vie en Rose*. Not to mention the eagerly anticipated *Beyond: Two Souls*. Could things be any better?**

**We caught up with him recently to find out, and to discover his own individual route to the top!**

**2dartist:** Hi, Benoit, it's a pleasure to talk to you today! Could you tell our readers a little bit about yourself and how you got into the CG industry?

**Benoit Godde:** My name is Benoit Godde, I am a French art director/concept artist based in Paris for some years now. I received my Master of Arts in Graphic Art/Design from ESAG Penninghen in 1995. After this, I worked as an art director in the web design industry. I spent a few years in some well-known companies at the time. At that time I concentrated mostly in graphic design.

In 2002, I decided to change direction and try to come back to what made me want to go to art school in the first place: drawing. After that, I decided to work as a freelance artist and started to work in the film industry. The experience was really amazing. I met many cool people working there. At the time, my work was mixed media; half of it paper and the other half CG. But I can say that a computer has always been present in my pieces, either at home when I was young, in school and even today.

"Young artists often have the same bad habits: They think they can do everything faster and better"

**2da:** When you were just beginning, what helped you the most in terms of the learning process and gaining experience?

**BG:** Young artists often have the same bad habits: they think they can do everything faster and better. You give them a subject, and one hour later it's finished, and most of them have done the same already-seen idea.

At the beginning of my studies in ESAG, computers were forbidden. They wanted us to learn that ideas don't come from blank screens.

Today, when I start a new project I spend days researching to see what others have already ►





● Personal work / Photoshop ©Benoit GODDE

**B**



done on the subject before I start. I'd love to say I open some books too. It is not really true. I surf the web a lot. And when I have enough reference, comparisons, and ideas; I open up Photoshop.

So for me, school gave me a really good method. There is also a Picasso quote that can help; "Good artists copy; great artists steal." But there's one last thing. Work, work, work... and more work.

**2da:** Can you take us through your typical work process? What tools do you use to get from an idea to a professionally finished piece?

**BG:** I do a massive amount of research before starting a project. I read a lot of articles. I like to talk with people I am working with, share ideas, mime out the action of the scene, etc. It's not very important at this point to be in front of a computer. I like drawing on glass with erasable markers to share ideas. Then the image is started on the computer. During this process discussion with others is still important.

**2da:** What do you feel is the most important part of this process that you like to focus on?

**BG:** I don't understand people who start directly on an image without asking themselves certain basic questions. I like to understand exactly what I have to draw. What kind of scene is it? What kind of information does this image need to show? Camera angles are very important. The details you put in your work need to say something.

**2da:** Do you have any advice for anyone wanting to pursue a career in the digital art industry?

**BG:** This is a hard question. I don't have any good advice. Everyone's way in is different. But if you ►



**"...if you like digital art, look  
around you and ask yourself  
if you are willing to put in the  
work"**



B





like digital art, look around you and ask yourself if you are willing to put in the work to be as good as you can possibly be.

**2da:** Where do you draw your inspiration from? What are your major influences and why?

**BG:** As with many concept artists, science fiction is a really attractive domain. Since I was young, robots have amazed me.

Starting with *Great Mazinger*, *Metropolis*, *Star Wars*, *RoboCop*, *Terminator*, *A.I.*, *I, Robot*... There are so many of them. Years ago I discovered two

short films called *Tetra Vaal* and *Tempbot* from director Neil Blomkamp; these short films really struck a chord with me.

I am also very impressed by artists like Klimt, Egon Schiele, John Singer Sargent, Antonio López García, Lucian Freud, and lot's more. ►

## 🕒 Artist Timeline Benoit's career up to this point

**1991 – 1995:** ESAG Pennighen / Master of Arts (MA), Graphic Art/Design

**1995 – 2002:** Art director in the web design industry

**2002 – 2006:** Concept artist in the film industry (César Awards in 2008: *La Môme (La vie en Rose)* / *Sur la piste du Marsupilami*, *Largo Winch I/II*, *La Rafle*, *Babylon A.D*)

**2006:** Concept artist on *Eight Days* (PS3 Sony Video Game)

**2006 – 2010:** Concept artist on *Heavy Rain* (a dark, interactive thriller blending exploration, dialogue and action on PS3. 3 Bafta awards, 3 AAA / Quantic Dream AAA titles)

**2010 – 2013:** Concept artist on *Beyond: Two Souls* (Quantic Dream's new PS3 exclusive. It features Academy Award nominee Ellen Page and Willem Dafoe in the lead role)

**2013 –** Art Director on unannounced PS4 title at Quantic Dream











● Concept art for the game *Eight Days* ©SCE London Studio / Photoshop



Concept art for the game *Heavy Rain* ©QuanticDream / Photoshop ●

Their work with women and light is really inspiring.

**2da:** What has been your favorite project that you have worked on to date?

**BG:** I have some very good memories from a movie called *La vie en Rose*. It was in 2006 and was my first meeting with Olivier Raoux, a great production designer who sadly passed away in 2011. I was working as a concept artist on the sets team. The vibe was really crazy; I have never experienced such a way of creating with anyone else. He was someone that really listened to ideas. Usually when you work with a person

of this caliber they won't consider new ideas, but with him he was always willing to consider something new. It was really different.

There have been other nice jobs after that too, but this one left me with some warm memories.

**2da:** What are you working on at the moment? And can you tell us about any projects that are coming up that you are really looking forward to?

**BG:** I actually just started a new PS4 project at Quantic Dream. There are so many upcoming next-gen and current-gen titles that I am waiting for, I'm really excited!

One I worked on is *Beyond: Two Souls* from Quantic Dream. This PS3 game is going to really blow some people's minds I think. I am really looking forward to playing through it entirely.

**2da:** It's always good to take time out from work and reflect. What do you like to do to relax?

**BG:** 'Nothing' would be the best answer. I don't have much time for me. Work takes time so when I want to relax, in the summer I like to go and lay in a park and read a book. Or have a beer and listen to music. ●



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# Ubisoft character designer

Ubisoft, Montreal lead character development artist, Xavier Etchepare talks to 2dartist about his inspirations, the appeal of 2D tools and his experiences of working as a concept artist in the video game industry. ▶



## The Artist



**Xavier Etchepare**

**Web:** <http://www.xabipage.blogspot.co.uk>

**Interviewed by:**  
Jess Serjent-Tipping

Xavier Etchepare is a French polyvalent artist, who has worked on advertising, clips, audiovisual events, short films and videogames for the past eight years. Xavier is in charge of visual character development at Ubisoft.





**Xavier Etchepare's career has been a long road, and not an easy one at that! After studying 2D animation at the LISAA in Paris, he went on to gain experience in 3D/compositing for advertising and events projects. With much hard work, talent and many personal pieces later, he was able to land a dream job in the video game industry!**

**Currently in charge of character design at Ubisoft, Xavier chats to us about his inspirations, techniques and the route he took to get where he is today!**

**2dartist:** Hi, Xavier, thanks for taking the time to chat with 2dartist! Could you tell us a little bit about yourself and how you got into the industry?

**Xavier Etchepare:** Damn, the road was long, I feel lucky with my experience; well, lucky isn't the exact word because I worked hard to improve my skills, but you know what I mean – it wasn't easy.

There were many art school students in the market each year, many contacts to make to have your chance, and it took a lot of personal work before I obtained an original touch that I could offer to the industry.

You have to keep in mind you must be creative and push your ambition as high as you can; this is the only way to be an interesting and recognized artist. I got into the industry because I was hungry and I imagine my employer liked it. (Hallelujah! A fresh, creative-driven student open to being paid poorly – the luck of the draw!)

**2da:** When you were starting out, what helped you the most to learn and gain experience? Did you find a good course or are you self-taught?

**XE:** I studied for 3 years in a private animation school in Paris (LISAA). It was an awesome experience because I discovered some magic formulas for proportions, perspective, chromatic circles; it was crazy!

It was the perfect way to introduce me to creative ways, but frustrating professional experiences made me stronger and more innovative. That's the point; I learned the most with all the mistakes I did and all the pressure I had during my first years in advertising. I had to work fast, effective and improvise a lot to get new ideas when my early propositions were refused. You can rise with failures, be positive!

During the years, I've waited to have a competent lead with artistic skills to learn from faster, then I met the first one three years ago! It's not common; you have to rely on yourself and adapt to survive. It looks like a jungle out there when I describe it like that, but it's not far off! After a few years, people will trust your skills and it will be easier to make your path in the sector. Patience can be frustrating, but will have fabulously efficient results.

**2da:** What was it about digital tools that made you want to work with them, and how do you feel it enhances and helps you get your feelings and ideas across?

**XE:** Photoshop is fantastic to experiment with! How many color sets and shapes have I discovered by coincidence and by changing layer modes?! And fast tools to scale, distort and flip images are what I need to perfect my layouts. But I had to come back to traditional training because computer shortcuts made me addicted and less mild-tempered!

**2da:** Could you tell us about your style and what inspires it? ►





● 2012, InGame illustration Xavier did for a Blacksheep Studio project. The first photorealistic project he worked on was a good experience



● 2012, Xavier desired to make a dinosaurs vs. robots image – a battle between two opposite generations with snow because he never uses it in his scenes





● 2012, a crazy guy for a Blacksheep Studio project. The intention was to make a scary character





**“I don’t think I have more than two images in my personal portfolio with the same process, that’s why it’s a mixture of different renders and designs”**

**XE:** When I was a child I was fascinated by old comic covers I found in my father’s stuff. I loved robots, dinosaurs and cowboys. But Disney and DreamWorks, with their old magic animations and amazing backgrounds convinced me to work as an artist one day. Manga series we had during the mornings in French television were also amazing; I loved imaginary violence!

Later, my few years experience with graffiti characters and some street art I saw in urban capitals, gave me the taste for political themes and experimental graphics.

So maybe my actual style is like an adult cartoon impressionist (impressionism because I always work with light and color first; during the drawing step I never clean it enough, and I’m quite lazy with details).

**2da:** What is your typical process when creating an image? Do you have an entirely digital workflow, or do you sometimes use traditional methods as well?

**XE:** I don’t think I have more than two images in my personal portfolio with the same process, that’s why it’s a mixture of different renders and designs. Sometimes I do a traditional sketch of a real life environment, I scan it and I add color. Then I put a character in, crop the image, change the composition, and I add in a funny element, and that’s the story for one picture! Each one has its own.

When I draw traditionally it’s easier to respect a process (pencil, India ink for contrast and aquarelle for color), but with the computer... a complete nightmare! I start with a first sketch in Photoshop, I jump to 3D for complex perspective, come back to Photoshop, and I draw again. I then find a nice photo reference on the internet and I integrate it, then I change the perspective one more time etc...



The cool thing is that I always surprise myself because when I begin a new piece I have no idea of the result. I love seeing something in my portfolio I never expected to create. With

no process, I create chaos, and chaos is really inspiring! The only thing I may have clear is the vision I had before the illustration. In general the mood of the piece leads to the final result. ▶

## 🕒 Artist Timeline Xavier’s career so far

**Spring 2005:** Graduated from traditional animation art school (LISAA Paris) after three amazing creative years

**Summer 2005:** First practice in MacGuff Studio

**2006:** Started learning 3D, and found a job at Publicis group in a creative cell

**2009:** Left the advertising sector after creative heartbreak

**2010:** Began pre-production for animated short films (*Daddy ABC*) and video games (*DarkRidestudio*) in Barcelona

**2011:** Integrated into the Ubisoft team as an external concept artist for two projects in Paris

**2013:** New Life in Montreal, a temple of video game studios, contracted as a character designer at Ubisoft for an AAA project









## **PRO TIP**

### **A tool, a solution**

Graphic ways are infinite; to choose the correct one for your work you have to think about the qualities and failures of each one. 3D is perfect for perspective, but looks bad graphically in the initial steps. Traditional sketches are spontaneous and dynamic, but hard to modify in complex scenes with background and shadows.

You can choose to make performances with only one tool. It's an interesting exercise and useful to discover new fast techniques, but don't lose your time and energy during a stressful production; choose the efficient one first and you will not panic.



**“Work hard, fight against the incompetence of others, keep in mind creative objectives and be a dreamer”**

**2da:** With working as a concept artist in the games industry, how do you find seeing one of your designs after one of the other members of your team has worked on it and brought it to life in motion?

**XE:** Another good question! Before videogames I was the guy who did the 3D design of my own concept. It's magic to give life to something that was once cold and static; it's the Frankenstein feeling of facing his creature. My creature was not always perfect, so I definitely dreamed to work with talented guys to make this come alive!

Later, I did all the pre-production for a 3D animated short film (*Daddy ABC*) in Dubai, but I never saw the result; and in my video games experience I always drew for InGame illustration, so this year is the first one that I made the design for 3D talented teams. For the moment it's a really gratifying feeling!

**2da:** Which artists do you admire and respect the most, and who would you say is your biggest influence?

**XE:** My biggest influence is the internet, as I've discovered amazing artists like Sparth (his Lasso tool technique); Craig Mullins (brushes everywhere and awesome texturing and rendering); Robert Valley (his designs are incredible); Sergey Kolesov or Feerik (the perfect balance of all precedent critters); and traditional

African mask artists with really elegant and unseen designs for cartoon faces. Mother Nature made a lot of fantastic shapes in the environment too which inspire me in general.

It could be curious for him if he reads this, but if I had to thank someone who made me what I am, it would actually be Pierre-Yann Sanquer, my college girlfriend's brother, who sketched amazing hip hop/tropical-stylized scenes in schoolbooks (in 1997/98). I always remember the impact his sketches made on me. I would like to pass down the same feeling to someone else.

**2da:** What's the biggest challenge you've faced as an artist?

**XE:** Many times I have gone down a non-official artistic direction on projects because I had





terrible leads without vision. It's the worst context in which to create, because you have to obey someone without competence and save the project artistically at the same time if you want to keep the job. It was a challenge to find a personal creative space in these cases, but I always found ways to have fun with my images.

**2da:** Do you have any advice for aspiring artists wanting to start a career in the industry? Any portfolio dos and don'ts?

**XE:** I think my experience can be representative of the advice; work hard, fight against the incompetence of others, keep in mind creative objectives and be a dreamer.

You have to use software like a medium to express your imagination; learn a lot of them, try

new technical processes each time and don't be shy to show your work – feedback will help you a lot (forums, colleagues etc).

**2da:** What has been your favorite project to work on to date and why?

**XE:** I think my current project has a really good balance. I have fun working with my colleagues, the universe of the project is really inspiring and ambitious, I meet a lot of talented people and I have the time to do all my stuff. I'm so happy with this experience.

**2da:** When you aren't working on digital art and concepts, how do you enjoy spending your time?

**XE:** Playing video games, reading comics, traveling, watching movies, sharing moments

with friends and preparing barbecues. Simple things, I am a bon vivant.

**2da:** Could you tell us about any projects you are working on at the moment or what you have coming up in the future?

**XE:** I am doing a game for iOS/Android named Socarrat Warrior with a friend; it will be an energetic, instructive and tasty experience! We plan to do some crowdfunding with it soon. We also need programmers to help us in Montreal, if anyone's interested? I have to prepare a small exhibition in a Mexican restaurant too and a sketchbook of Montreal city. Many projects to come in the future! ●

2009, Xavier travelled around Mauritius for a month; he drew a lot there ●



## The Artist



**Xavier Etchepare**

**Web:** <http://www.xabipage.blogspot.co.uk>



# Art Gallery

Each issue the 2dartist team selects 10 of the best digital images from around the world. Enjoy!





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Jordi Gonzalez

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## **Umbrellow**

Christopher Balaskas

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<http://edvigefaini.com/concept-art>

**Rostam & Dragon ▼**

Juan Pablo Roldán

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MARK NELSON

Sketchbook

With clients such as Wizards of the Coast, Marvel, and DC comics, we are excited to be able to share with you the beautiful pages of Mark A. Nelson's fantasy sketchbook in this month's 2dartist sketchbook feature.

## The Artist



**Mark A. Nelson**

**Web:** [www.grazingdinosaurpress.com](http://www.grazingdinosaurpress.com)

Mark A. Nelson is currently a freelancer, but has taught at Northern Illinois University and Madison Area Technical College, and has worked for clients such as Marvel, DC and Wizards of the Coast. He has also worked on the video games *Star Trek*, *Star Wars* and the *Doom* franchise for Raven Software and 3D Realms Studios.



### Mark A. Nelson gives us an insight into his world of fantasy by unleashing his sketchbook on us

The sketchbook is your own personal sandbox. It is a place to go and do things for you, take risks, have fun, to do studies, research and open up your art world. One of my first drawing teachers, Jack Youngquist, got me used to carrying a sketchbook around with me. I now usually have a small Moleskine to draw in while I'm waiting (everywhere from the doctor's office to air flights) or recording some visual notes on the spot.

Observation and research have always been the greatest methodologies for me. The visual wealth we have available is incredible. I think of it as if the Ancient Library of Alexandria is at our finger tips; the internet, books, museums, zoos and aquariums have got it covered! The sketchbook is an idea-stretching tool. You know where your weaknesses are and here is where you can destroy them. Draw 100 hands in your sketchbook, for yourself. You don't have to show anyone. Just watch the progression, take chances, and have fun.

In starting a design or any drawing, I usually go through the who, what, why, when and where scenario. This is where all the variables of mood, emotion, horror or humor fall into place. Why would a lizard wear a top knot, pierce his nose, and carry around a small friend? Do bird creatures have bad hair days? What gives them a character or believability? Where do they live? Happy? Sad? Angry? Sleepy? How do they interact? All these questions add to your design.

#### Inspiration and ideas

Inspiration is all around. Mother Nature has given us a world of amazing creatures, faunas and environments to draw from. We have built and changed it as other animal architects in the animal kingdom do, to adapt and give us our living spaces. There are so many magnificent cultures with their own identities to extract inspiration from.

**01** Studies of heads for possible creatures. Col-erase 20044 on laser copy paper

**02** Black and white prismacolor on Strathmore tone paper, grey









## Materials

I draw on all types of paper, smooth to rough, Bristol board to 100% cotton. Each paper has its own qualities. As an artist, it is up to me to try and see what these papers can offer to my drawing. Pencils, ink, nibs and brushes also bring different qualities to each drawing. I do have a fondness for Col-erase 20044 on laser paper for layouts and concepts, and love toned paper with black and white Prismacolor pencils also.

## Sketching Techniques

Drawing can be done in many ways; loose, tight, minimal, or complex. For me, it is the mood I'm in and what I want to accomplish. I love to draw in different ways: the simplicity of a Disney image to the complexity of a Virgil Finlay drawing. In other words, who is right: Rembrandt or Dürer? They each have their own look, distinct abilities and their unique visual solution. So what are you trying to achieve in the drawing?



## PRO TIP

### Push your limits

Keep challenging yourself, grow as an artist, and try new mediums. Push your ideas and the techniques will be learned quicker: because there is a reason to learn them.

03

Delegation to the Coz Bird.

Black and white prismacolor on Strathmore tone paper, grey

04

Brown ink, white prismacolor

pencil on Strathmore toned paper, tan

03

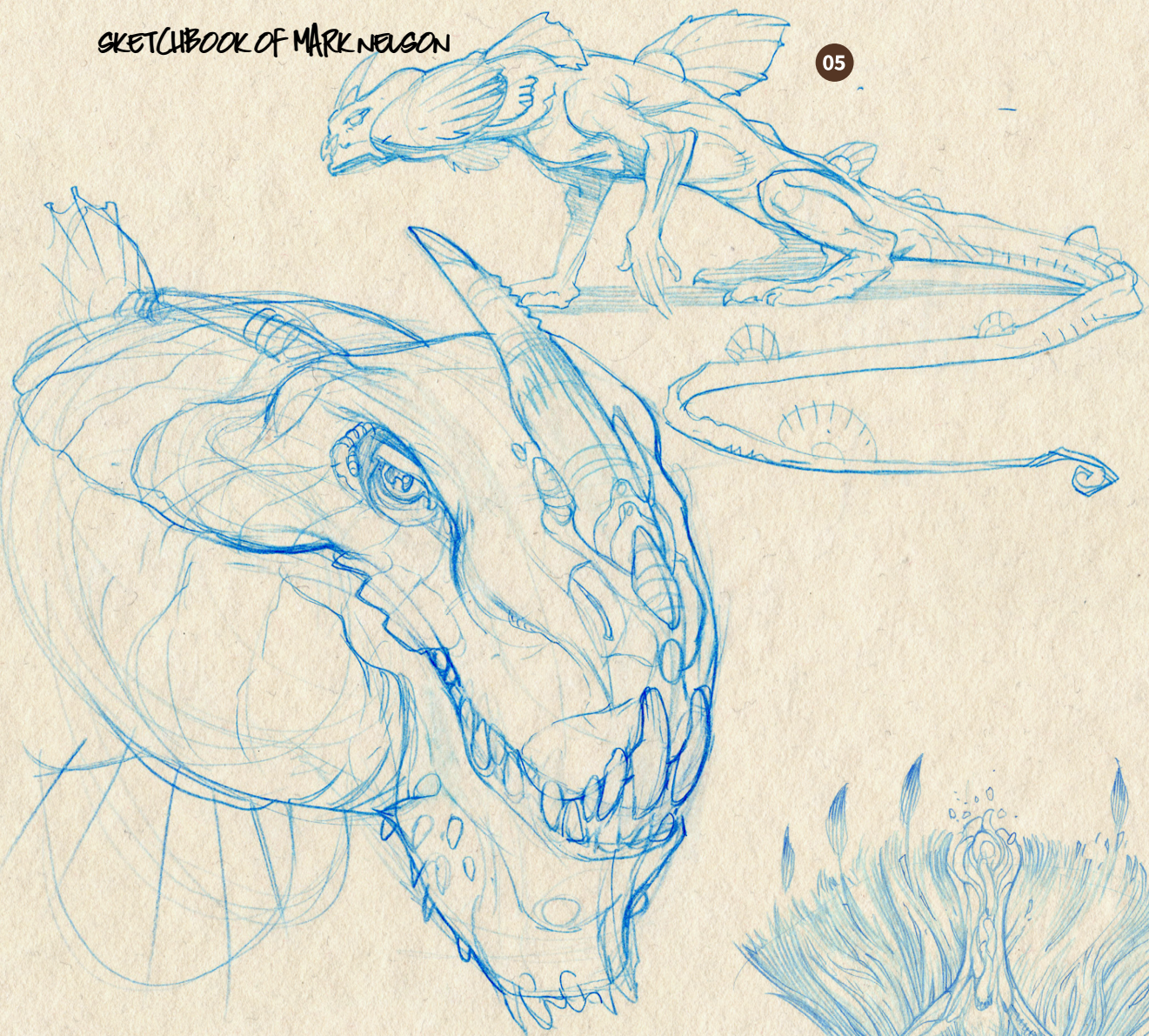








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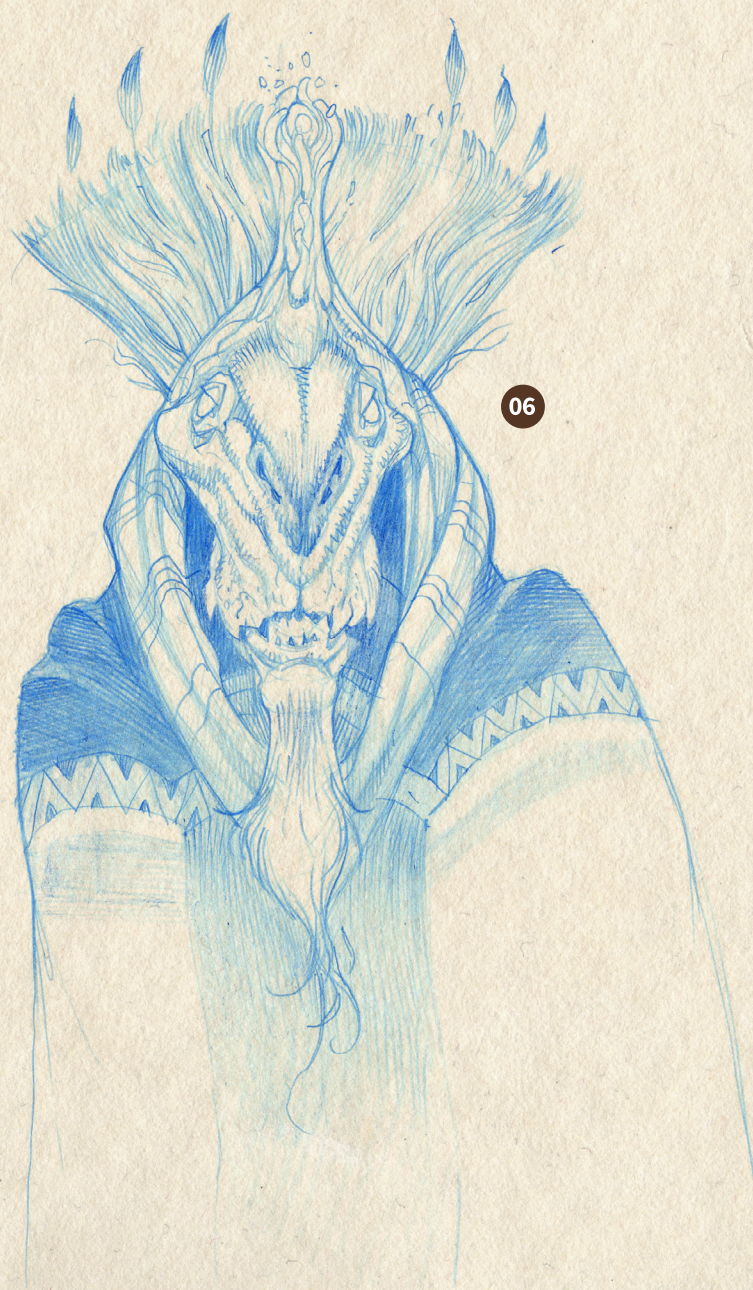


05 Dragon head and study of the young spawn, Col-erase 20044 on laser copy paper

06 Local royalty in Vermillion Sands, Thunder Hunter's Universe Col-erase 20044 on laser copy paper

07 Brown, sienna black and white prisma pencil on Strathmore toned paper, tan

06



## ⚡ PRO TIP

### Research

Research the company you want to work for. Don't show up with work that doesn't fit the client's purpose. In other words, don't show up with a painting of an apple pie and expect to get fantasy work painting dragons.

What the Art Director wants, they get. If you have time you can do an iteration and show them.

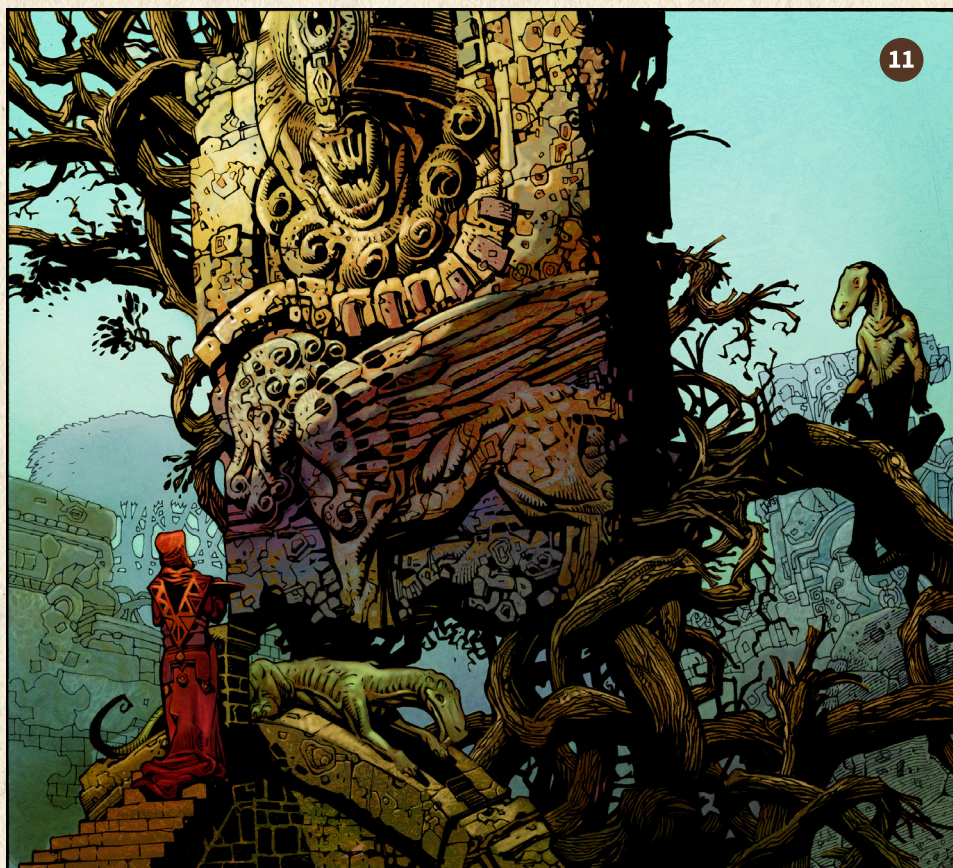












- 08 Moleskine paper and black prismacolor
- 09 Where ideas come from, moleskine paper and black prismacolor
- 10 Moleskine paper and black prismacolor
- 11 Temple Dawgs of Vermillion Sands, pen and ink (Brush) and computer colors



12



12 Royalty Portrait #2 Vermillion Sands (color),  
Photoshop for colors

13 Royalty Portrait #2 Vermillion Sands (ink)  
Canson Fanboy Bristol Board, crow quill nib,  
Pentel color-brush for inks



13





14 Royalty Portrait #4 Vermillion Sands, inks, crowquill nib, bombay black ink, Pentel color-brush

15 Royalty Portrait #4 Vermillion Sands, pencils, Canson Fanboy Bristol Board, Col-erase 20044 and 2h lead (in lead holder)





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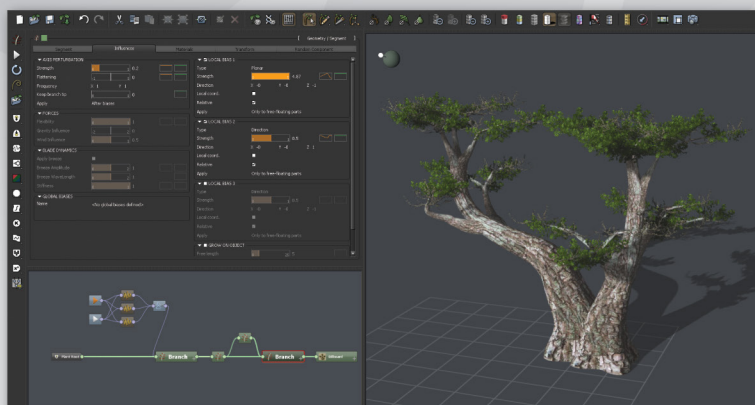


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## The Artist



**Paolo Puggioni**

**Web:** <http://www.paolopuggioni.com>

**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

Paolo Puggioni works as a lead concept artist at Jagex for a long-running MMO, as well as a freelance illustrator. Designing characters is a big part of his day-to-day job. What Paolo normally has to focus on is strong, easily readable silhouettes.

# How to form fungal villains

Shapes, color and theory are an important part of character design. You can create a feeling of good or evil in visual design by changing the combination of these. In this tutorial, Paolo Puggioni shares how he uses color and shape to convey those key factors that make his character recognizable as an evil villain. ▶





## Paolo Puggioni shares industry tips on how to harness the evil in a character...

This is not the first time I've had to draw some kind of 'fungal villain'. Oddly enough, I am designing something with similar premises for the game I'm working on. However, due to engine and technical limitations, I ended up delivering something distant from what I originally had in mind, which is why I jumped at the opportunity of doing something similar, but this time free of constraints.

What I had in mind while pondering on the project was a character somehow 'possessed' by a weird kind of fungal entity. As a villain, he would greatly enjoy spreading disease and making people suffer! However, the price he pays in order to do so is that his body is almost completely taken over by spores, to the point of being horribly twisted and maimed.

Despite the 'messy' nature of the subject, I try to stay away from textures or even texture brushes, which would be a natural choice in this case.

I often find texture brushes difficult to control, at least in the initial phase, which is why I stick to a few, standard out-of-the-box brushes and a couple of custom ones.

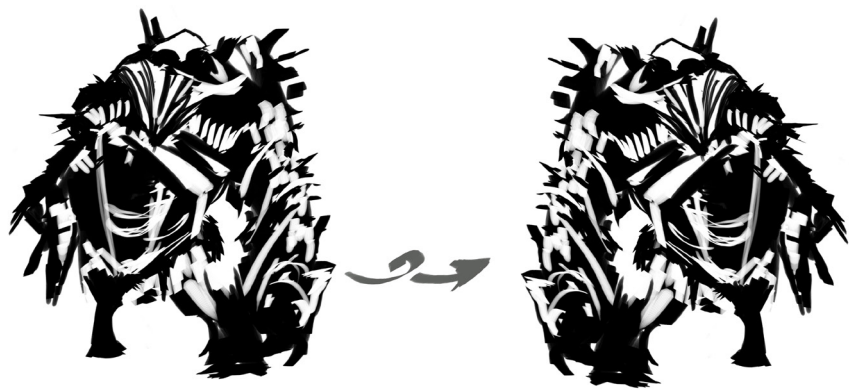
There are just a handful of commands, tools and palettes I will use throughout this tutorial. The most important one is the HUD Color Picker (Ctrl+Alt+Shift and click anywhere on the image to bring it up).

The color picker is immensely useful to quickly adjust chroma and value. To select the desaturated version of a color, bring up the color picker, and click somewhere at the left of the original point. I do it a lot, and always place some grays next to saturated colors to make them look more vibrant.

The color palette (Window > Color) is another window I always keep open. Every few brush strokes or so I tweak one of the sliders just slightly, to create more variety.

**01 The initial sketches:** The first step is always a sketch. Depending on the situation, (or admittedly, my mood) I start with a gesture drawing, a line work sketch or maybe a colored thumbnail.

Every situation calls for a different approach; there isn't a 'best way' to go about this. Most



01

importantly, the sketch will eventually be lost; it's just a tool for you to get to your goal. So use whatever style you're more comfortable with!

In this case I use a technique that I often use when designing hard surface subjects, like vehicles or space ships.

I paint in black with a flat, hard brush, which results in very bold lines. Then I erase some parts with the same brush tip to create the internal shapes. At this stage I constantly flip the sketch over to spot imbalances and imperfections. It's amazing how wrong something can look once mirrored on an axis. ►

### ⚡ PRO TIP

#### About concept art

Most people mistake concept art with illustration. Both disciplines are indeed based on a solid knowledge of traditional art, perspective, anatomy and color theory. However, as far as concept art goes, drawing skills are just a tool to convey ideas, game mechanics, mood and so on.

'Pretty drawings' are, in a way, just a by-product of what we do. The skills and interests that really matter to us are actually quite distant from traditional art: novels, science, biology, technology, movies, animation and history.

Anything could be an inspiration for something else at some point, and be eventually translated into video game assets.



**“Having a main color to start with makes it a lot easier to stick to a consistent palette. All the other colors will just be variations of the first color I pick”**

**02 A flat color to start:** Once I’m happy with the character’s silhouette, I make a copy and move it to my second monitor, keeping it as a reference throughout the first stages.

After this, I simply color-in the whole shape with a base color. Regardless of what I’m doing, this is very often the first step of my coloring process, and possibly the most important. Having a main color to start with makes it a lot easier to stick to a consistent palette. All the other colors will just be variations of the first color I pick.

Some areas will be of a lower or higher value and other areas will have a different chroma; I’ll paint some parts slightly more red, green or yellow by adjusting the sliders on the color palette.

However, my entire color harmony will be based on the first tone (or couple of tones) I chose at the very start.

**03 Development:** The next step is just a development of the first flat gradient I chose at the beginning. At this point I have decided which parts deserve more interest, where the main light will be placed and also how different areas of the image lead to others.

In this case, the most saturated colors would be around the head and right arm. The left part will be colder, and the entire bottom half will have the lowest value. This is, by far, the most crucial step of the process, where most of the important decisions are taken.

Once I am happy with how the colors are laid out, it will just be a matter of tweaking the local colors and values, and obviously polishing up.

Well, maybe something more than that, but not too far from it.

**04 Some proper drawing:** Now I can start with the proper drawing. Here I use the simple default round brush, changing Flow and Opacity quite often (press numbers from 1 to 0 to adjust Opacity and Shift+1 to 0 to change Flow).

For some reason (despite using Photoshop for over 15 years) I’ve only recently started to properly adjust the Flow.



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Anyway, if you use low Opacity but high Flow you often end up having very muddy and messy areas, with colors building up in an unpleasant way where brush strokes overlap.

By coupling low Flow with low pressure you get nice, delicate brush strokes. Use high Opacity and high Flow to have bolder strokes.

At this stage you might want to lock the transparency of the layer (press /) so that you don’t have to bother painting within the edges.

**05 The first details:** I normally start painting from the center of interest (in this case his face, shoulders and left arm) and relate the rest to it.



Something I'm pretty picky about is how details (actually how all the elements) are distributed. I imagine myself with a distribution budget: I will have a certain amount of details, a certain amount of warm colors, contrast, saturation and possibly sharpness.

The areas of interest will have about 70% of this budget, whereas the other 30% will be distributed among the rest. For example, I won't use bright colors on its feet so that it doesn't attract attention from more meaningful parts.

The area around his face will be sharp and well defined, with brighter colors and more contrast, while the rest of the image can be left more subdued and less refined.

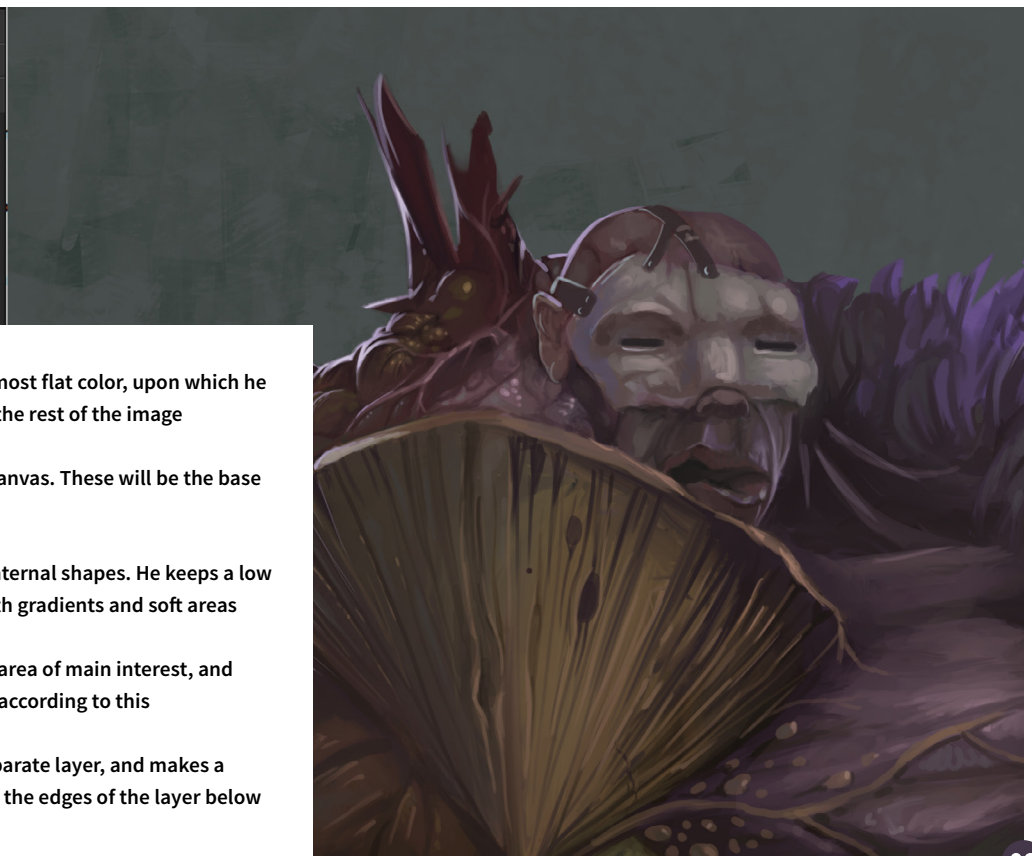
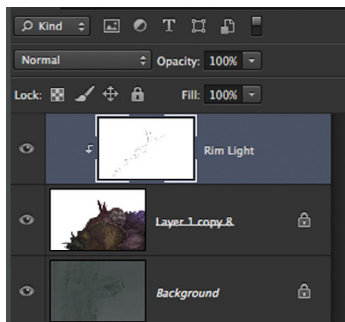
An image with evenly distributed details and color is less effective and more difficult to read!

**06 Some rim light:** I decide to add a rim light on the left side to emphasize the shoulder area a bit. Since I wasn't sure I would like it, say, 300 steps down the line, I kept it on a separate layer.

I also thought I might decide to erase parts of it later on, or to make it thinner or larger. The best way to do something like this is to create a Clipping layer. Clipping layers are created on top of the main one. Their advantage is that ►



05



06

- 02** Paolo always starts with an almost flat color, upon which he creates the color harmony for the rest of the image
- 03** He places more colors on the canvas. These will be the base for all the other colors he uses
- 04** Here, Paolo sketches out the internal shapes. He keeps a low flow when needed, with smooth gradients and soft areas
- 05** Paolo starts painting from the area of main interest, and balances the rest of the image according to this
- 06** He paints the rim light on a separate layer, and makes a Clipping mask to bind it within the edges of the layer below



whatever you paint on them is confined within the boundaries of the underlying layer.

The steps to create a Clipping layer are fairly simple: On the Layers Palette, you create a layer above the one that you want to paint on; select both of them; right click and select Create Clipping Mask. Whatever you paint on, the Clipping layer will stay within the edges.

**07 Painting the glow:** The right arm is the villain's main weapon! I thought it could do with some eerie evil glow, as if its sheer size weren't threatening enough!

Painting things that glow is fairly easy. Just create a layer at the top, and in the Layer Palette set its blending mode to Dodge. Now, with a big, soft round brush (Opacity and Flow set both to 10) paint the areas you want to be glowing.

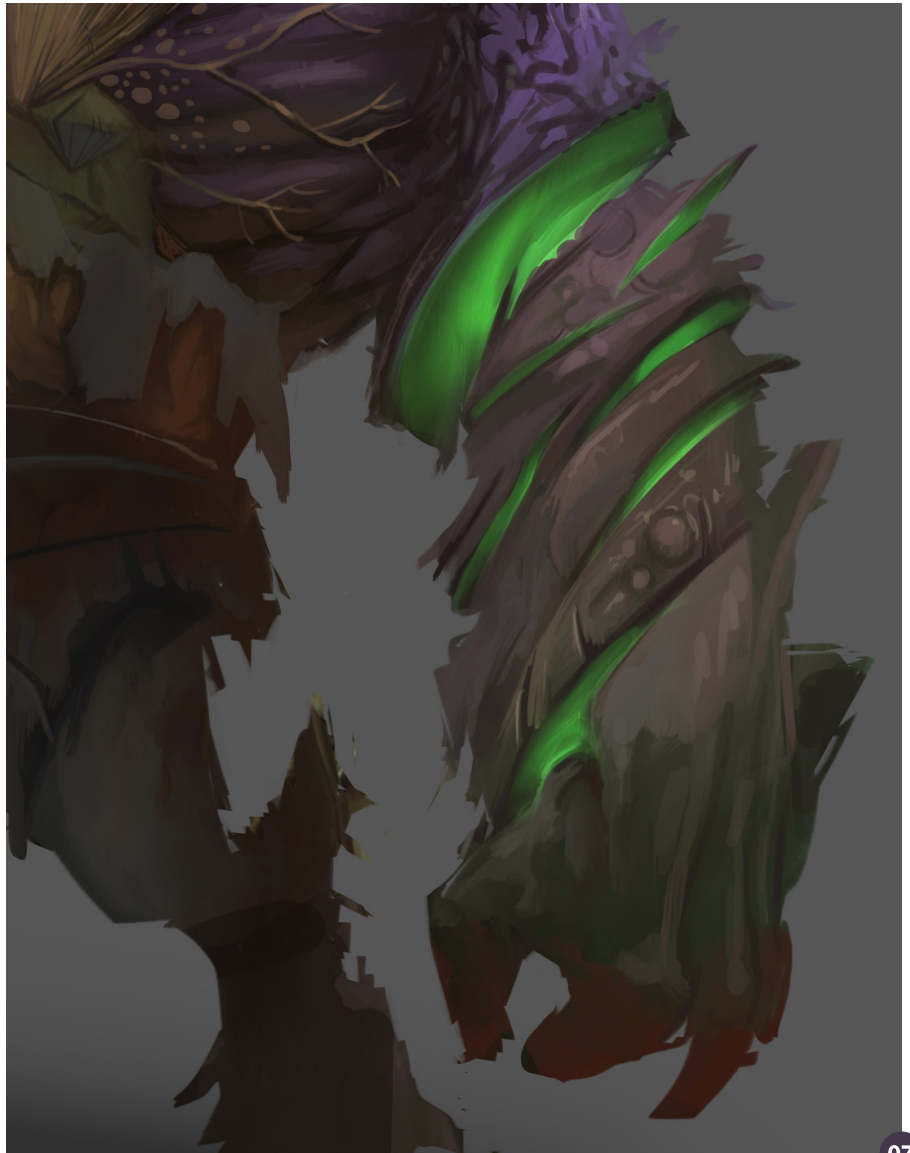
The color you choose must be roughly mid-chroma and somewhere between middle and high value; too high a value will result in a very unpleasant, excessively bright color.

Once you're happy with the glowing parts, go ahead and erase the areas you don't need with a smaller brush.

Using a small brush to paint glowing areas always results in a mess. Just use a big, soft brush for the glow and a small one to refine the edges.

**08 Placing the chainmail:** I decide to give the villain some makeshift chainmail protection. He probably patched it together by looting the bodies of his victims!

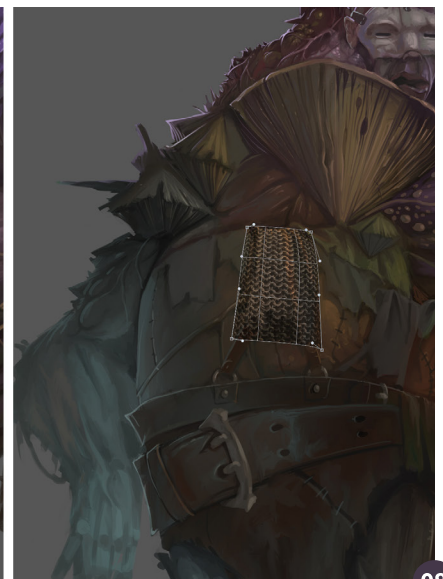
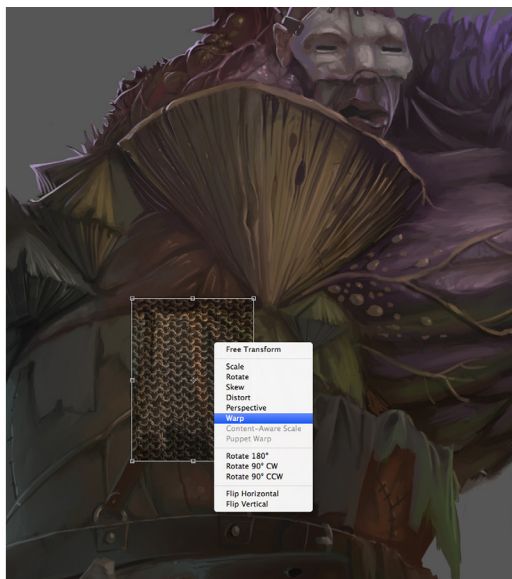
I apply one of the free chainmail textures you can find on the internet by the hundreds, and



07

took away almost all of the saturation to avoid messing up the underlying colors. I left the Blending Mode on Normal.

The best way to adapt a texture to a curved surface is to use the Warp tool. With the texture layer active, press Ctrl+T (Transform). Then right click and select Warp. Move the handles to match



08



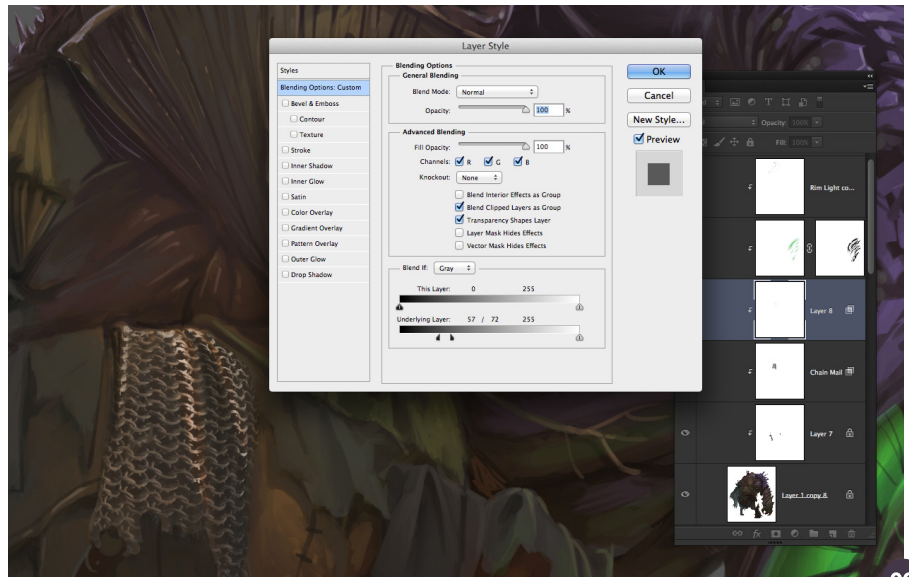
the edges of the shape you want to apply the texture to. Once you're happy with it, press Enter. If you're picky you can use the Puppet Warp command (Edit > Puppet Warp).

Now every click inside the layer will add a handle you are able to move to refine the shape and create creases.

**09 Blending the textures:** Most people will set textures on Overlay mode, whereas I think it makes colors quite artificial and generally quite ugly if not used properly.

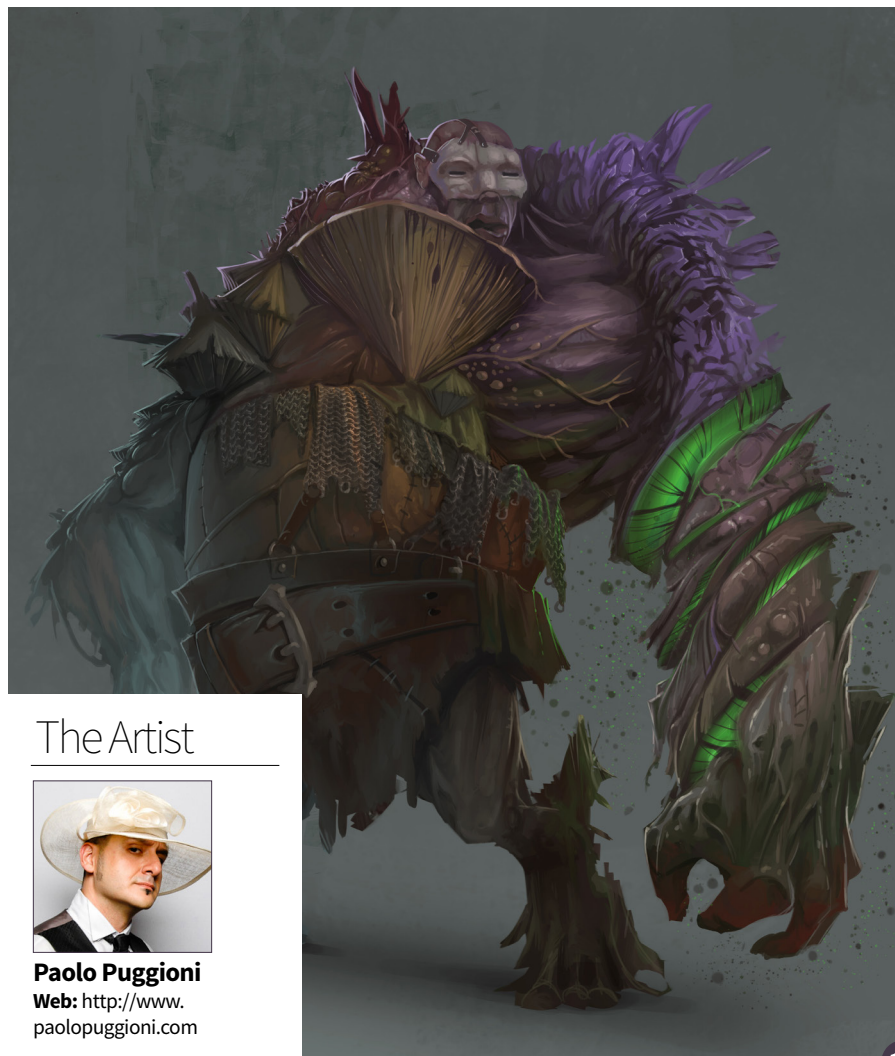
What I normally use are the Blending Options available in the Layer Style Window. You can double click on the texture layer (in this case our chainmail) to bring up the window. At the bottom, move the left arrow of the Underlying Layer slider to the right. This means that the underlying layer will start to appear through the dark values of the texture layer.

When the image starts to look noisy, stop moving the slider. Now Alt+LMB on the right half of that arrow, which will split it in two (I know, not



intuitive, is it?). Moving it further right will make the effect more subtle.

You can do the same thing on the right arrow (the bright one), to have the layer underneath affect the opacity of the higher values of your texture.



## The Artist



**Paolo Puggioni**

**Web:** <http://www.paolopuggioni.com>

**10 The final touches:** If you've read this far you might have noticed I'm almost done at this point! You can continue polishing the image almost indefinitely; it all depends on what you're using it for. As a concept, this is way too detailed already. For a marketing image you'll need a lot more definition, maybe some more textures and so on. In this case, I thought it was just about right.

I just add a subtle rim light on his right arm, not as strong as the one on his shoulder but enough to define those sketched areas a bit more.

I also add some spores falling off his battle arm, for which I used the usual standard brush but changed the Scattering Options (press F5 for Brush Setting), Size Jitter and Opacity Jitter.

Just some more grays next to saturated areas to make the colors pop more, and your Sporemancer is ready to go out and wreak havoc. ●

- 07** Paolo paints the glow on a layer set to Dodge Mode; a large soft brush to paint and a smaller brush to erase
- 08** Paolo uses the Warp tool to bend a texture over the image and make it look tri-dimensional
- 09** He uses the Blending Options in the Layer Style window to blend the texture with the image below
- 10** The last stage is always about polishing and adding the last details like highlights and dark shadows

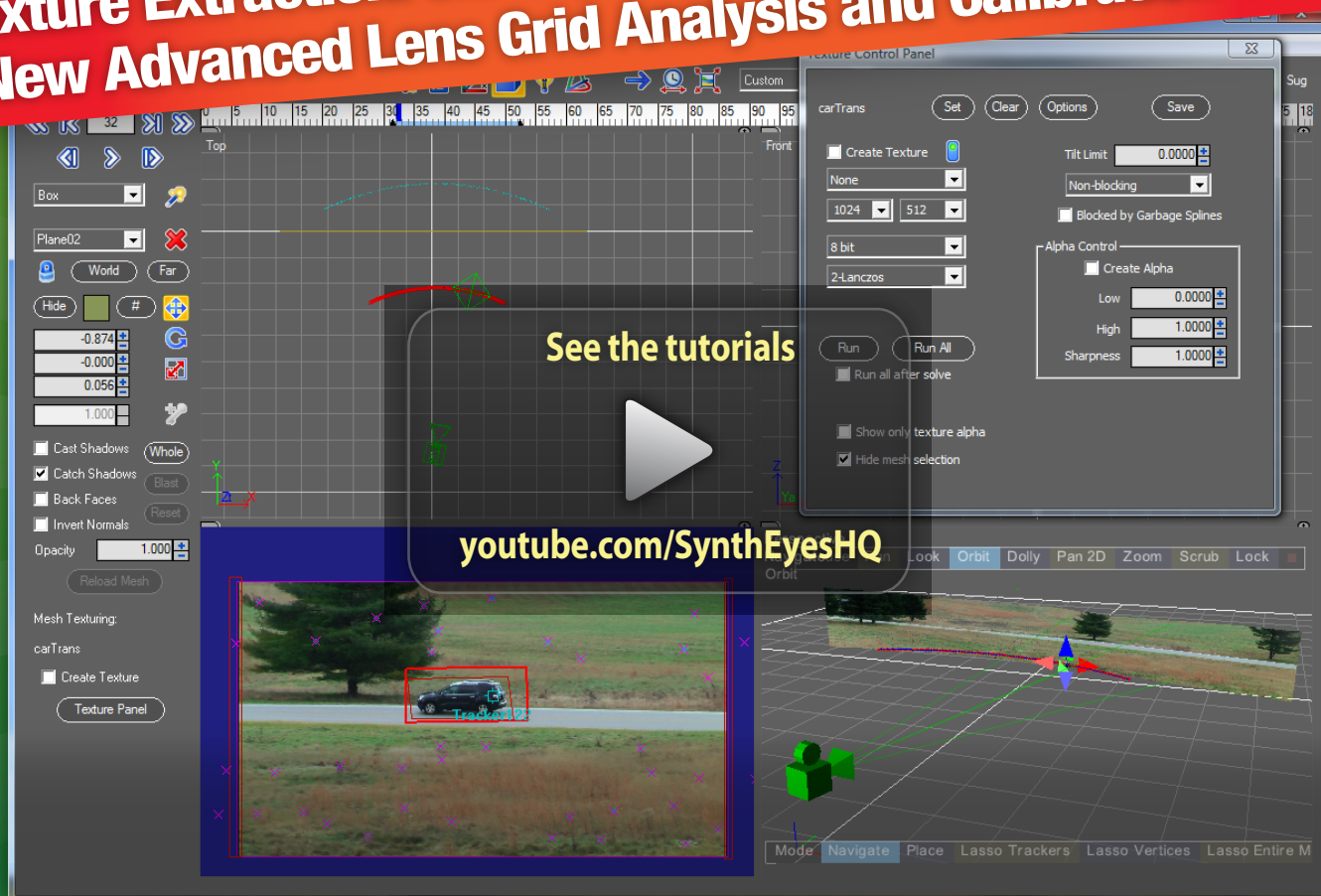




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## The Artist



**YongSub Noh**

**Web:** <http://yong.cghub.com>

**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

YongSub Noh is a self-taught, 3D animation artist from South Korea. He currently works for NCsoft and enjoys playing PC games, playing the drums and working on concept art in his spare time.



# Make magical creatures

Fictional universes are often used in games and films, with fantasy being a popular theme! It is important that all the elements that make up these fantastical worlds, such as characters, environments and creatures, work together to create something so believable that the audience is captivated. In this tutorial, YongSub Noh guides you through his process of creating an enchanting sky creature. ▶







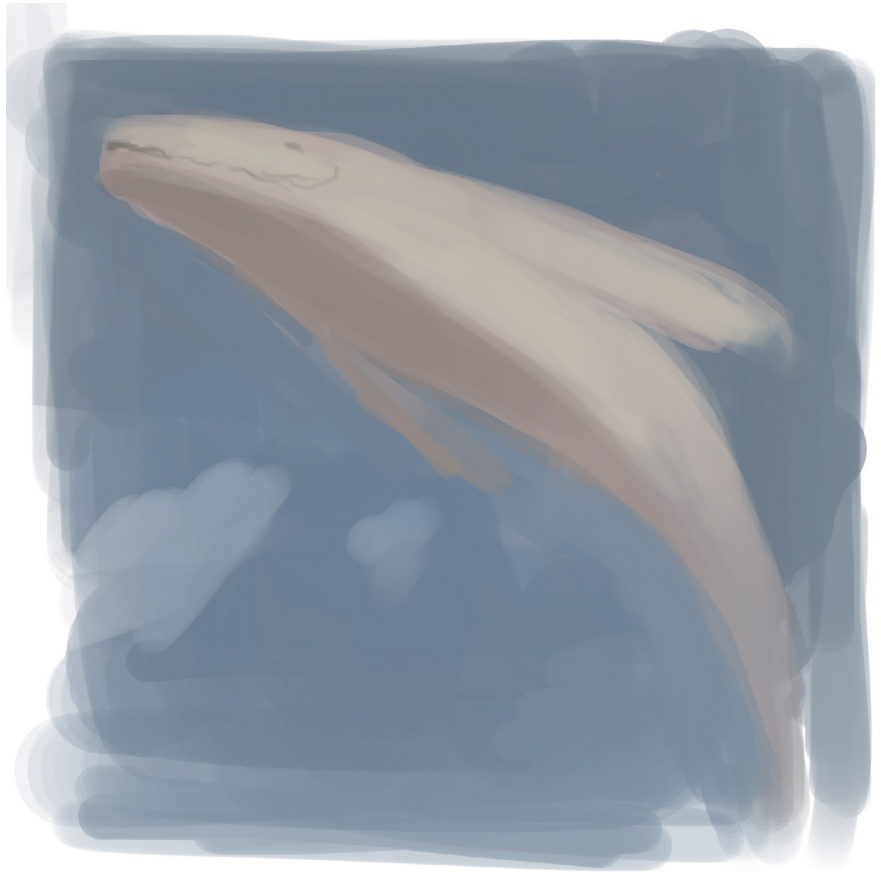
## Create concept creatures with the help of YongSub Noh's industry techniques...

The topic for this tutorial is 'creature', integrating the classic and familiar theme of medieval fantasy.

My chosen software is Photoshop CS6; however, the type of software you use is not all that important. The quality of concept artwork is determined by the sense and technique of the artist, not by the tool. Tools are just tools, so don't depend solely on them – trust your artistic senses and instead focus on improving your skill.

So let's begin!

**The concept:** As always, the first thing to do is imagine what you're going to create in your head. I just came up with the idea of two creatures – a dragon and a whale. A whale is a very attractive creature that I really like, and a dragon is the best creature to represent the fantasy world. I think it would be interesting to mix the characters of these two creatures.



01

Just like this, artists usually have two approaches when designing creatures. One is modifying an already-existing creature, and the other is creating a new one out of nowhere. What I'm trying to do is the former approach, as, for me, creating a new creature is a very hard thing to do. Human imagination tends to base new ideas on their past visual experiences, so creating something totally new that never existed is a great thing – but in reality it's almost impossible.

To become a good creature designer, it's still important to observe animals and plants around you closely and watch documentary films on nature. Of course, you can also watch a lot of other artificial designs that are present in movies, cartoons, animations and games.

Okay, now let's pick up a pen and start drawing!

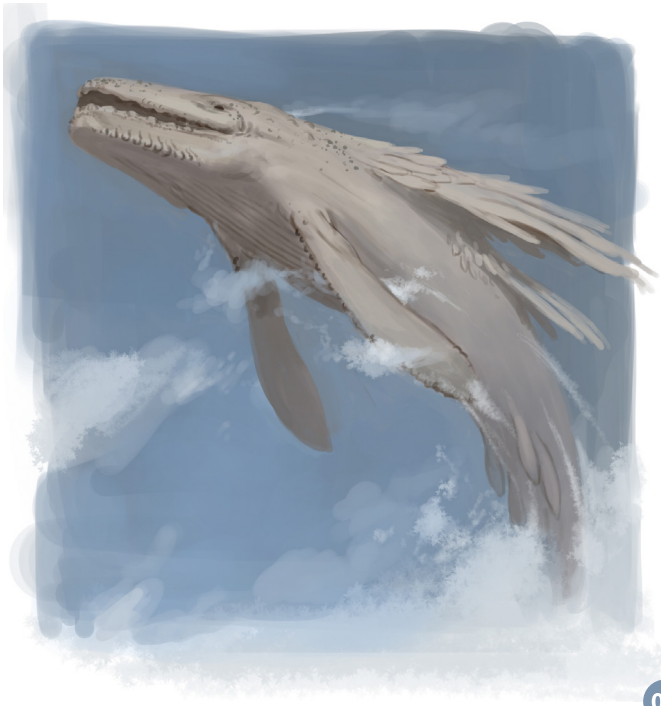
**01 Initial sketches:** First, I am going to draw a gigantic creature that is flying high into the sky. Draw a basic silhouette of the subject in a quick and bold manner, and at the same time decide the direction of the light. Speed and boldness is the key to the drawing in the early phases.

**02 Shaping your image:** In my sketch, the shape of the body is based on a whale, though I have drawn wings to



02





03



04



05

**“Detail can be based on a shape but it can also be a form of light or texture. To progress your work sensibly, keep your balance and avoid focusing on small parts too much”**

help it fly in the sky. In your own sketch, don't bother with the details yet. Just keep shaping it up and focusing on perspective, structure and the balance of colors on the screen.

**03 Finalizing the design:** Usually it's easier and faster to draw creatures than drawing people/humanoid figures because a

human has a formulaic shape, so if you miss something out then it will be noticed instantly. Creatures however can be designed freely and diversely, so fear nothing and just keep going!

**04 Adding the detail and texture:** The shape has been pretty much drafted out now, so let's get into the details. Detail can be based on a shape but it can also be a form of light or texture. To progress your work sensibly, keep your balance and avoid focusing on small parts too much.

**05 Creating reality:** It might not be so obvious on the surface of their skin, but creatures have bone structures too.

Just as you would study anatomy to draw a human body better, it's very important to imagine the bone and muscle structure when you draw a creature. If you fail to imagine a realistic one, your creature can end up looking somewhat awkward. ►

**01 Sketch using a bold and quick manner**

**02 Just keep shaping your image – don't worry about the detail**

**03 Design your concept freely**

**04 Add the detail consistently**

**05 Studying anatomy can help your creature feel realistic**





**06 Refining the shape:** Here you can see that I'm adding more detail and refining the overall shape of my creature more. As I always say, your artwork doesn't need to be perfect from the beginning. It's better to try this and that as you progress.

**07 Making changes:** Here you can see that I'm changing the shape of my creature's wings and the head. Sometimes the result might not be as good as you expect in your head, or your skill might be too poor to express what you want: and if you get those kinds of feelings, just change your image without any hesitation at all. Just be cool when changing your artwork, with quick and bold strokes.

**08 Changing the image again:** Did you notice that I'm changing my drawing again and again? This kind of practice is fine; feel free to change your image until you are satisfied. A drawing can be incomplete and unattractive and it's fine, but unnatural and strange ones are bad. The best drawings are those that are expressed naturally. Don't forget this.

**09 Adding more realistic detail:** Now we're at the stage of expressing detail







08

in the bones and muscles. The flow of drawing is always like this: from the simple, large parts to the smaller, more detailed ones. It doesn't change no matter what subject you are drawing.

**10 Adding texture:** Now I'm focusing on expressing the texture. I'm shaping it up to look like a whale but I also want to remind you that my ideas were influenced by the textures and details on a dragon.

**11 Finishing the texture:** This image shows how I add a bumpy texture. By now, the picture is looking more complete.

At this point, I don't use layers in Photoshop. After so much practice, I have become a more experienced artist and so make fewer mistakes; this means that I don't have much use for layers. If you're worried about making mistakes however, it's okay to use layers as much as you want.

**12 Using brushes:** I trim the clouds as seen in this image. This creature is being drawn as if it's jumping up into the sky through the clouds, just like a whale jumping up out of the water.

I usually use the Maple brush or very soft brushes when drawing clouds, but if you want them to be very realistic then try photographs. Drawing it freehand can be the most satisfactory practice, but for this artwork, describing clouds is not particularly important so I won't put too much emphasis on this.

**13 Final touches:** I adjust the contrast in the last moment, though personally I'm not totally satisfied with the wings, but the image itself is tolerable enough.

Now it's complete! Designing a creature is a very amusing job. Characters and environments are also fun, but when you draw creatures, you have so many opportunities to create something new with no boundaries. Sounds like an attractive job, doesn't it! ●



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**06 Adding detail and refining the shape**

**07 Making a few subtle changes to get a better result**

**08 Expressing a natural image**

**09 Always move from basic shapes to more detail**

**10 Adding texture to make the dragon element more obvious**

**11 Starting to add a bumpy texture**

**12 Using Maple brushes to create the soft cloud effect**













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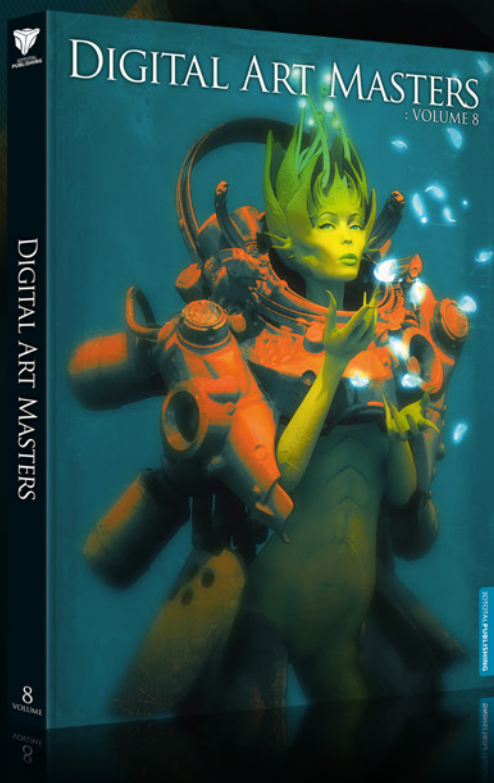
# DIGITAL ART MASTERS

## :VOLUME 8

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Charlie Bowater

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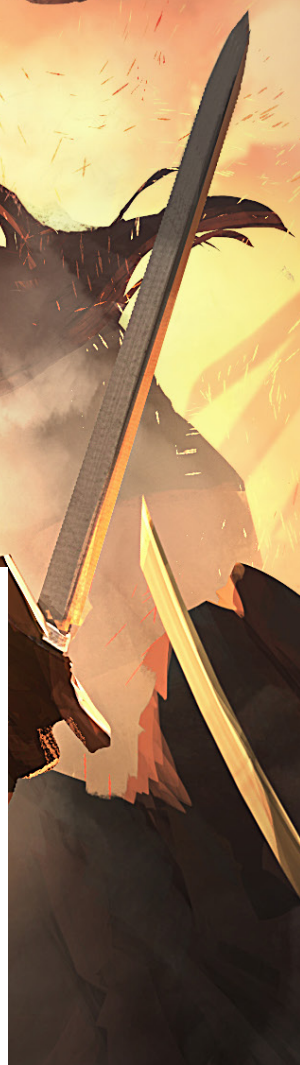






# Illustrate scenes of epic proportions

In fantasy films, the peak of a story is almost always an epic war. Usually a main character will, at some point, darkly intone, “The board is set. The pieces are moving,” and you know that a dramatic battle is about to ensue! To help you on your way to creating your own gripping scene, Donovan Valdes is on hand to give you tips and advice on creating a complex scene between two battling sides! ▶







## The Artist



**Donovan Valdes**

**Web:** <http://www.donovanvaldes.com>

**Software Used:**  
Adobe Photoshop

Donovan Valdes is a concept painter and illustrator, specializing in visual development and design. His credits include *Assassin's Creed*, *Prince of Persia*, and *Far Cry*. His art has been featured in various publications and exhibited at Ubisoft Headquarters in Paris, France. Donovan also provides aspiring artists portfolio help and mentorship through [www.conceptcritique.com](http://www.conceptcritique.com).



## Donovan Valdes divulges industry tips to create a large scale battle scene...

Given the task to imagine a battle scene between two visually different groups, my first inclination was to make a traditional 'humans vs. orcs' piece or something similar. I knew I wanted one side to be human as this helps me identify more with one faction, as opposed to 'zombies vs. orcs', for example. The difficult question was, what would the enemy be?

I wrestled with a few sketches, but couldn't settle on a composition or camera view I found interesting. All the subjects' identities were getting lost, since both were roughly human-sized, and it made for some bland compositions. However, once the idea occurred to me to make one side vastly larger in scale, I instantly grew more interested in the possibilities, and ran with it.

**01 Thumbnails:** I got started by exploring some pencil-on-paper thumbnails, trying to find some dynamic poses that struck a chord with me and helped sell a story. What are the subjects doing? Are both sides locked in a ferocious exchange of blows, or is one side clearly overwhelming the other? What emotions can I imagine for those on the battlefield?

For a complex scene with so many subjects, I knew finding a good angle to capture everyone's poses would be tricky. This was truly the



01

most difficult part of the assignment – hitting something that would inspire me to move forward. In most cases, once I find a key pose I like, the rest will slowly fall into place.

Once I chose the pose of the giant looming over the smaller human fighter, I could imagine the larger scene. I wanted there to be a dramatic sense of scale, even hopelessness, as this towering figure lunged at his foes. I feel it's important for a piece to tell a story, and in this case I wanted these giants to be scaling a large hill or wall to meet the defending humans on top.

I sketched-in some other giants down the line, receding in the distance, and added some human reinforcements. I knew I wanted a wizard in there close to the camera, to add character variety,

color, and some cool magic. I also planned for more human fighters in the distance, forming a small line against the climbing giants.

**02 Rough values:** Next, I separated each actor onto his own layer. This gave me flexibility to make adjustments later, and allowed me to move forward with confidence when trying new things. I also blocked-in the solid shapes more clearly, and separated the planes of depth with value contrast. The foreground (four human figures), mid-ground (cliff edge and main giant), and background (the other giants and humans) all had to stand out clearly from one another, and sell their proper orientation to the viewer. The further from the camera, the more the silhouettes faded, obscured by fog, smoke or whatever.



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**03 Base color:** I started to drop in some base color onto my giants when something started to bug me. Even though I was initially pleased with the composition, a couple of hours staring at it convinced me it still felt flat and detached from the viewer. True, I was selling the sense of scale, but I wanted to feel like I was in the battle, facing this terror myself.

Since all my good guys were on separate layers, it was easy to experiment with different placements, and I settled on a far more dramatic perspective. Simply scaling up the humans and pulling them towards the camera immediately changed the image for me.

Don't be afraid to overlap some elements, or crop them out all together, if it helps sell the overall shot. In this case, I lost the warriors' legs, wizard's hood, the left soldier's shoulder, and overlapped the shield and woman's hair – but it worked, and you don't miss them.

**04 Lighting source:** Around this point, I decided to take advantage of the cliff

edge and turn these beasts into fire giants, climbing not over some arbitrary cliff, but out of a boiling hot rift in the earth. This felt not only more exciting and purposeful, but gave me a lighting direction to shoot for. Red-hot lava and steam would make for some great under-lighting.

With this new, more focused direction, I added a fire-lit, smoky background and a fiery glow from beneath. I also started trying some base color on the foreground characters to get a sense for the palette. The blue on the main warrior would help him emerge from the scene against the warm tones of the main giant.

I also added some additional ranks of enemies behind the first, implying a horde of giants still to come, and tweaked the second giant's scale and position a bit.

**05 Altering poses:** Having a better sense of the scene, I fleshed out the cliff edge a bit more with cracks and basic light. I also decided to change the wizard's pose. After scaling the wizard up, his staff was interfering with the giant's

fist, and I wanted both to stand on their own. I replaced it with an outstretched hand which ended up being much more dramatic and made for some interesting negative shapes around that area.

The giant silhouettes in the background started taking shape at this point, and were faded as needed to help with depth. ►

**01 Creating the initial composition in a thumbnail sketch**

**02 Beginning to add in some rough values**

**03 Adding the first hints of color and adjusting the composition**

**04 With a lighting source established, smoky glows were added**

**05 Fleshing out the background and altering poses**





06

**06 Adding more color:** I dropped in some color for the female of the group, giving her a unique palette from the rest. I also implied some basic lighting on the weapons, aiming to sell the hot glow from the lava. The added steam rising from the earth's cracks not only went with the theme, but conveniently helped the wizard's cloak stand out against the dark ground.

**07 Lighting effects:** One side-effect of my pose-change for the wizard was that the

arm of the middle giant was obscured, so I shifted his position to get the striking arm in the shot. I added some light FX for the wizard's magic, again going with a cool tone to contrast what would be a very warm scene at the end.

I also finally filled out our hero on the left, and made sure his spear tip would be distinct from the giant's shoulder with a simple rim light on one side.

**08 More lighting:** The scene really started to come alive when I began lighting. With the bottom source of light in mind, I filled in the downward facing planes on the giant with a hot light on a vivid-light layer. I contrasted this with a cooler, softer light overhead on all the upward facing planes of his form. This left the planes facing the viewer as the darkest and most saturated, with no major light source washing out the local color.



07



**“Added smoke and steam helped to create depth, separate important figures, and in this case, sell the setting”**

It's important to stay true to your light sources across the painting once you've decided where they are. Even though I might sometimes cheat to highlight a certain area, I find that inconsistent lighting is a major culprit in bringing down the believability of many paintings.

**09 Smoke effects:** Added smoke and steam helped to create depth, separate important figures, and in this case, sell the setting. Our main soldier's form suddenly pops against the smoke, and the giants are pushed back further into the scene. It also further highlights the wizard's hand and staff, and the main giant's fist. Plus, the smoke just looks cool.

For these effects, I happen to have a favorite brush (you may have to experiment) which emulates clouds beautifully, and rotates the tip according to the pressure I use on the pen. The result is a nice organic, layered effect.

**10 Color balance and saturation:** I then finally added our human fighters in the distance, poised to defend against the ascending horde. Again, I used value to sell the receding ►



## ⚡ PRO TIP

### Take advantage of the digital medium by taking risks

This is something I often have to remind myself of, but it's true! With the limitless flexibility of layers and the power of 'undo', why hold back? Go ahead and try that idea or brushstroke with confidence – you can take it back in a flash if you don't like it.

I can say without a doubt that I erase as much as I create. It's the process of sifting through the bad marks and finding the good ones that makes the painting special, and ultimately leads you to improve. Too many artists are scared of making the wrong mark, and end up with tight, uninteresting strokes as a result.

- 06** More color is added at this stage
- 07** Making the scene pop with lighting FX
- 08** Lighting the scene
- 09** Creating depth in the image by adding smoke effects
- 10** Tweaking the levels to balance the composition





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ranks, going lighter and less saturated the farther I went from the camera. It's a limited space to work with, so I had to take care that the forms didn't interfere too much with the wizard – simple silhouettes were sufficient. I merely wanted to imply a large group of soldiers, and not get carried away with unnecessary detail.

I also tweaked the main soldier's color balance on the left, sliding the red and yellow up a bit to keep him consistent with the warm light that was bouncing everywhere.

**11 Making adjustments:** At this point, I merely made lighting adjustments, adding what I could to solidify the characters in the space while remaining true to my lighting direction. Hot spots on the main soldier's chest and shield arm, as well as the wizard's outstretched hand, helped in this regard. I dropped in a stronger, cool light on the left soldier's helmet-top and the wizard's head and hood. Shadow helped to push the main giant's eyes back into his skull a bit, and made him look more menacing.

**12 Light layer:** Everything up to this point felt right, but it was when I tried a dramatic vivid-light layer to really emphasize the fire that the scene finally came together. The red glow bleeding over the soldier's helmet and arm made the fire appear even more intense, and added details, like embers floating up, helped to sell the environment.

**13 Final touches:** All that was left at this point was to drop the background action further with a Gaussian blur filter. A little blur on





13

the mid-ground, more on the far background, plus an Unsharp mask on the foreground characters helped keep the focus on the main characters up front without sacrificing the feeling of a large battle all around. And the piece is finished. Ship it! ●

- 11 Making lighting adjustments to highlight details
- 12 Adding a lighting layer to bring the scene together
- 13 Making minor final adjustments

## ⚡ PRO TIPS

### Keep the big picture in mind

One of the biggest mistakes I see aspiring concept artists make is to focus too much on unimportant areas of the painting, and apply far too much detail where very little is necessary. For example, an artist can often imply detail and suggest forms in the background with very few brushstrokes, leaving you time to add detail to the truly important subjects of the piece.

It often helps to not zoom in, allowing you to see the entirety of the image at all times. Just ask yourself what the painting is communicating, and stick to it.

### Preserve Transparency is your best friend

Discovering this feature of Photoshop literally changed the way I painted. After establishing a solid form I'm happy with, I can go crazy painting inside them, without fear of breaking the silhouette. It often works better than a lasso, since it won't leave that ugly rough edge, and you can assign it to an Action to really speed up your process.



## The Artist



**Donovan Valdes**

Web: <http://www.donovanvaldes.com>









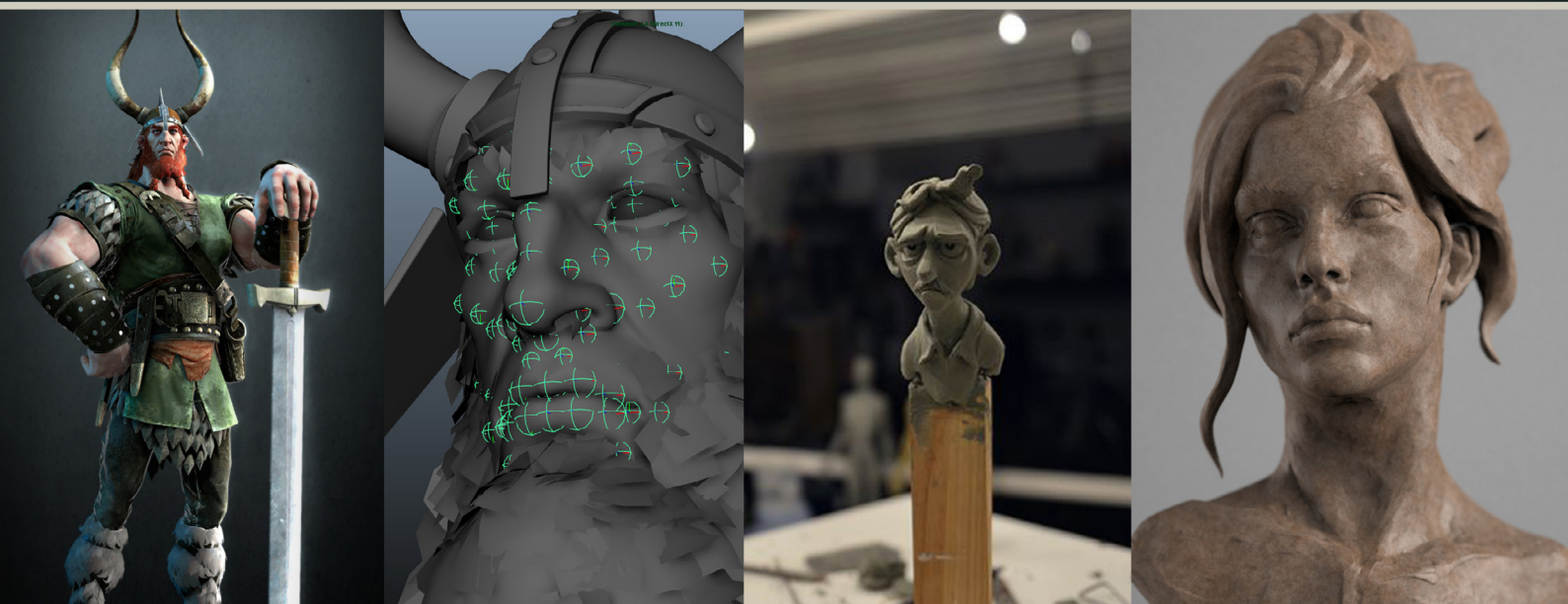
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## The Artist



### Clonerh Kimura

**Web:** <https://www.facebook.com/clonerh.kimura>

**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

Clonerh Kimura is a concept artist and character designer, as well as occasionally a comic book colorist. He lives in Mexico City, and has been working in the animation and video game industry for the last five years.

# Painting sci-fi girls

Clonerh Kimura's love of sci-fi, girls and guns fueled the inspiration behind his image, Journey. In this month's Project Overview, Clonerh guides us through his thought process, from the early stages to the finishing touches of his illustration. ▶



## Read on to discover the techniques Clonerh Kimura used to create his image

Sci-fi, girls and guns are just some of my inspirations. I'm a big fan of many things, but Japanese animé, comic books and sci-fi movies are my principal inspirations. Amazing pieces such as *Akira*, *Ghost in the Shell*, or, on a different note; *Stars Wars*, *Aliens* and *Blade Runner* have had a massive impact on my life. My image *Journey* is a kind of personal tribute to all those pieces.

In the last year or so I've had the chance to create concepts and design characters after spending a lot of my career as a colorist. I've never considered myself to be a good line art artist, but what I do is exploit my skills as a colorist, and use them to create these kinds of pieces.

For anyone out there who has the same problem, this project overview could be very useful, even though it only scratches the surface. I hope you enjoy it as much as I did making it.

**01 The idea:** Well, let's get started! The first step is very simple, but very important. I make a quick sketch with the pose I want my final character to be in. Normally I make four or more sketches until I find the best one. In this step it isn't necessary to use references, just try to make as many sketches as you can. In my case I wanted something simple, but badass, so I chose this simple and effective pose.

**02 The sketch:** Now, in this step, many people try to define the character with trace and that's good, but not in my case as my skills in line art aren't as good as they could be; it would be a waste of time to do this. So the only thing I do is trace the areas that I think will be more useful when I paint. Even though at this point I know exactly what the final result will be, you can always modify anything you want during the process.

**03 Evolving the sketch:** This step isn't important, but I wanted to show it. At this point I was still modifying 'trace'; I even added some more elements, like the helmet, and gave it more shape in the silhouette – as well as adding shadows and marking some of the light areas. Up to this point, I hadn't spent a lot of time on the illustration; in the case I don't like something I can return to the beginning without wasting a lot of time. ►



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01 A series of initial thumbnails

02 Defining the outline of the character

03 Taking the sketch further by adding some highlights and shadows





04

**“Here it is convenient to spend a little more time adding all the elements that you think are necessary”**

**04 Grey vs. color:** Here, I started to define more things. Basically, I started to paint with gray tones. Why? Because of time; I sometimes paint directly with the color, but mostly I use the grayscale in my process for two reasons. The first one is because it takes me less time, and the second is because it's easier to notice where the hardest shadows are and where the brightest points are. In other words, I start to define the character's volume from this point with the gray.

I modified some things by cutting and pasting, which is very simple, keeping in mind that we still haven't added details yet.

**05 Definition:** The following two steps are the most important in my process, because at this point I define just about the whole picture. Principally, the face is the area I always start with and it's always where I spend most of my time.



Here the use of references are important. Most of my references were for the face, body, and the jacket. For the back-pack, the helmet and the



utility belt I didn't use any references. Here it is convenient to spend a little more time adding all the elements that you think are necessary.

05





**06 Color:** Now it's time for the color. Before looking at the details, I added a Color layer and adjusted the Color Balance to add a blue tone to the grays; this is of course optional – I did this because I didn't want to keep that grayscale tone.

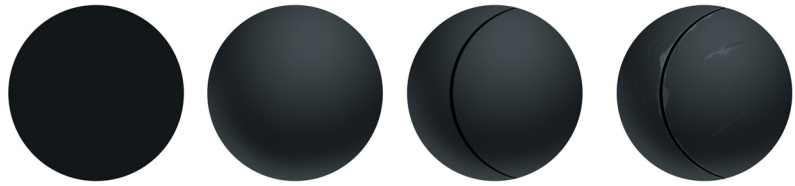
Then I added the rest of the color. Simply put, in a new layer with the Overlay mode on, I started to add the skin tones (mixed with blues, greens and reds to achieve a more natural skin tone). I added some brown and green tones to the bags and backpack, and yellow to the helmet. Everything else stayed the same as the previous step.

This is another reason why I used gray tones at the beginning; because I can play with the colors more and try different options.

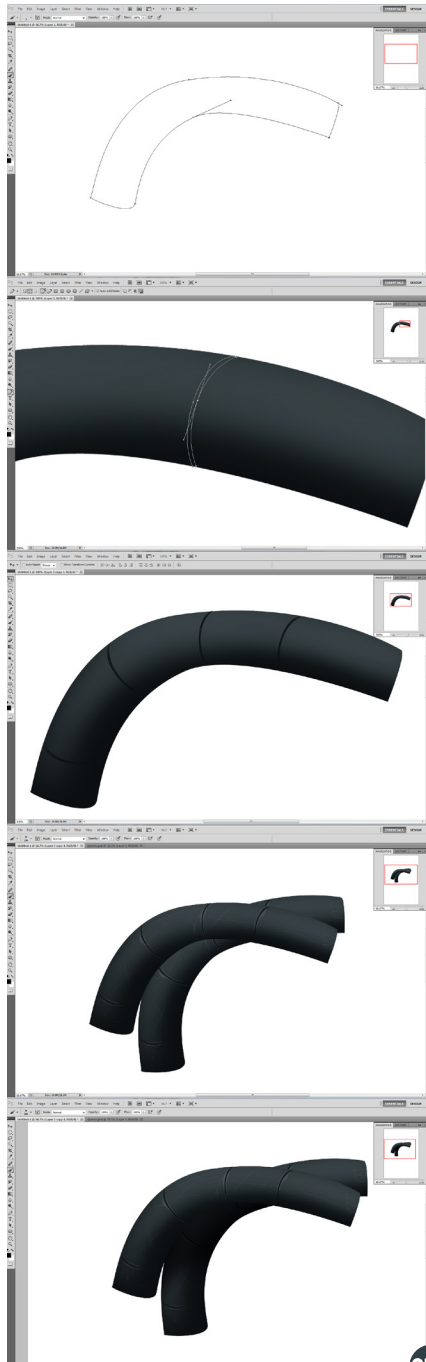
**07 Details:** From this point on I've finished with the creative part to focus on the details. My recommendations for this step are to use all the references and textures that you need, a long playlist and a lot of patience. Just for the record, I don't usually use many textures based on photographs, but in this case I did. The advantage of using photographs for textures is that you save a lot of time, and if you use them correctly your illustration will look fantastic.

Here I used some textures for the screws, the buttons and the gun. I retouched over the gun to integrate the illustration.

I didn't want to focus on the details too much, but I'll show you just a couple of things that I think are important. The first thing is the helmet; it doesn't really have many details and in the example I made there is a sample of basic lighting, and in the last sphere I only started to add details like



07a



07b

scratches that age the materials. Almost all these details were done by hand, because it's a fast and simple process.

In fact if you want a detailed tutorial I made a tutorial about aging materials in *Digital Painting Techniques: Volume 5*. ►



07c



07d

**06** Adjusting the colors to achieve a blue tone

**07a** Spheres demonstrating basic lighting and adding scratches

**07b** Cylinders created with the same lighting as the spheres

**07c** Color and highlights added

**07d** Defining the outline of the bag and helmet





Another thing I wanted to do with the helmet was define the edges. After trying a few things with little result, I decided to use my last option of using the Pen tool. It was my last resort, as I don't have a lot of experience using this tool, and I wasted a lot of time doing so, but I have got to admit that it's a very useful tool.

I made a cylinder and I colored it the same as the spheres. Afterwards, I added another pipe behind the first one and cast the shadow over the pipe; it's that easy!

**08 More details:** The illustration is almost done at this point, but first I wanted to add some final touches. In my personal pieces, I like to add references that have important meanings to me – others are just for decoration



and fun. This is a perfect time to get rid of some stress and have a little fun adding some little details to the illustration.

**09 The last step:** This is the time to make any final adjustments, and where the color balance, the saturation and the level adjustments come into play. The only thing that I can say here is spend as much time as you need on these three aspects, until you get the correct balance for all of them.

Once I have all of this, I play a little bit with the channels, but I don't recommend it, as the illustrations can lose definition. This was a common mistake when I started, and I see the same mistake in a lot of artist's work. So play with the channels but don't over-do it!

In this case, I added some Blur in the Red channel and that was it! The illustration was finished!

This project overview is to give you an insight to how I work, and I hope you can find something useful in it that you can adapt to your own style and make something totally different and amazing! ●

**08 Adding little details**

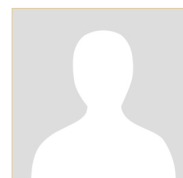
**09 Close-up of reference details added to the helmet.**

**10 Adding a Blur to the Red channel to call the illustration done**





## The Artist



**Clonerh Kimura**

**Web:** <https://www.facebook.com/clonerh.kimura>



# 2dartist

## next month

- The art of Disney Interactive Studios concept artist, Sam Nielson
- YongSub Noh paints an industrial region
- Discover new character art skills in Photoshop
- Create heavy weaponry battle scenes with Carlos Cabrera
- Christopher Peters shares his guide to painting toxic characters
- Discover industry tips and tricks from Roman Pavel
- 10 of the best digital images from around the world
- Leaf through inspiring sketchbook pages
- Plus more!









## The Artist



### **Ioan Dumitrescu**

**Web:** <http://www.ioandumitrescu.com>

**Software Used:**  
Photoshop

**Bio:**  
Ioan Dumitrescu is a 20-year old architecture student and a self-taught concept designer. He loves drawing the things he imagines in his head and trying to convey a story to the viewer through them. He is currently working freelance.

## DIGITAL ART MASTER:

# Discovery

## by Ioan Dumitrescu

Talented video game concept artist Ioan Dumitrescu is a master at laying down lines. This issue, he shares his creation process of building an image from start to finish. Read on to discover the making of *Discovery*... ▶





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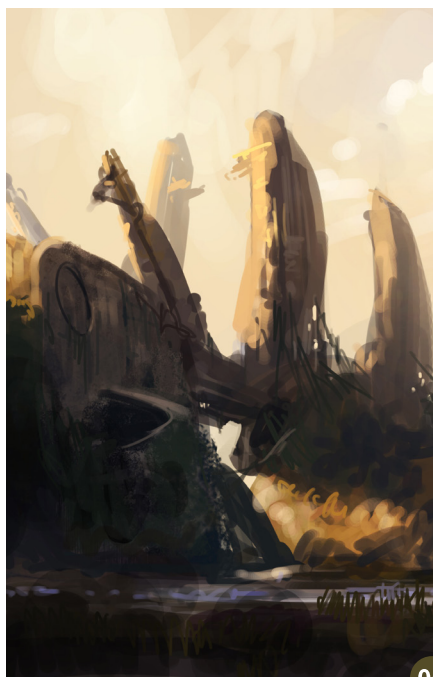
## My Painting

In this tutorial I will show one of the ways I build an image from start to finish. First of all, before laying down any lines, I started thinking about what I wanted to draw. Creating a personal image is very different in comparison to painting for a client. For one you get to experiment and for the other you have to achieve reliable results.

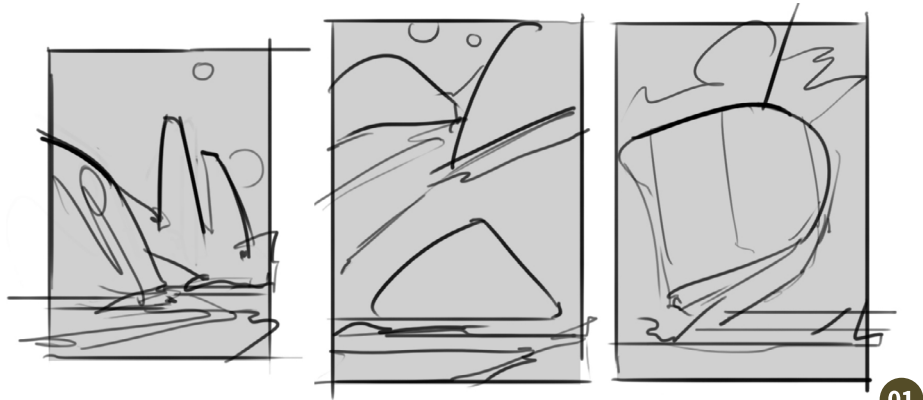
I'd had this image in my mind for quite a while and it had always been an interesting subject for me to approach and explore. I was thinking about a huge, derelict, sci-fi construction that was either alien or human and had been fighting a losing battle against nature's forces. Having this as a starting point, I proceeded by sketching on a zoomed out canvas in order to focus on the composition and relationships between the various elements (**Fig.01**).

Try to rid yourself of predetermined ideas or fears. The only thing you have to worry about is finding a striking composition. In this case I had a really clear idea in my head, but I still wanted to sketch out a few more variants; maybe they would be of some help or trigger some extra ideas. I knew that it was important to suggest the huge scale of the derelict base, so my solution was to have it occupy the center of the image along with a large part of the composition. The other aspect I liked was that the perspective went beyond the frame, which somehow helped increase the scale and keep the focus on the base (**Fig.02**).

Then it was time for the next phase: painting in the values. For that I needed to decide on the lighting and general atmosphere (**Fig.03**).



04

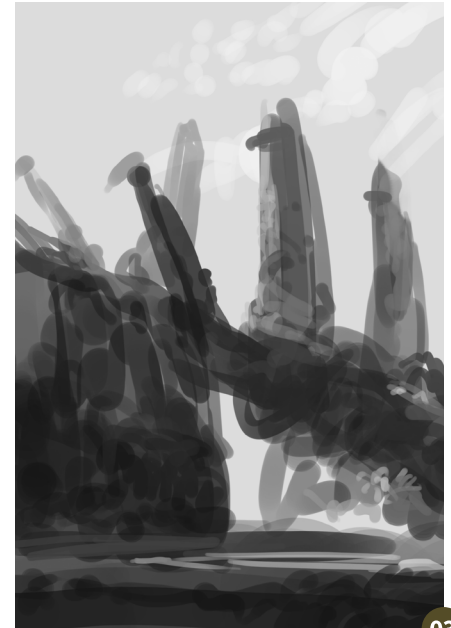


01



02

I decided to place almost everything in shadow as it would increase the impact of the derelict building and also help with the story. I chose to depict the magic hour (first few hours of sunrise) to achieve this dramatic look, which meant the light hit the edges of the landscape. This type of light would also give me interesting yellows, oranges, purples and greens in the shadows.



03

It also allowed me to use warm grays, which created a nice contrast and gave me the epic feel I was looking for (**Fig.04**).

Now that I had my composition, values, light and color, I was ready to start focusing on the design. I started to consider the function of the base, which helped a great deal. I decided that



05





06

**“This is the whole trick behind concept art and good ideas; taking elements that you find in real life, and that are recognizable, and translating them into something we’ve never seen before”**

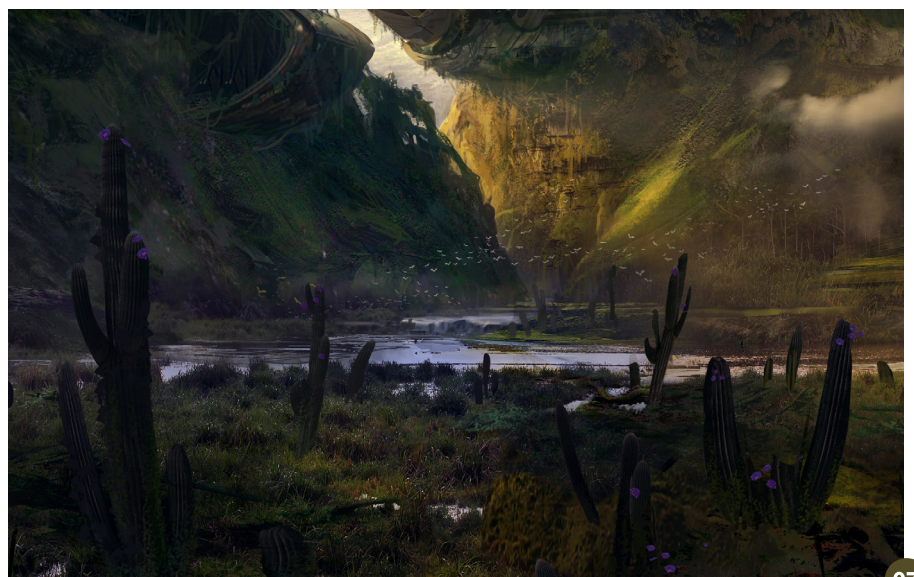
it was some sort of telecommunications centre from which ships were deployed on various missions. The larger pillars represented some sort of antenna that helped communications from a command center on an alien planet.

The first thing I do when I have an idea is to search for references from either my own folders or just from Google. To help me to start to think about the shapes and forms, I looked at photos of old plane components. For the landscape I looked at jungle pictures with dense forests and swamp-like fields and tundra.

I had the idea of merging the natural and the man-made elements more closely by digging into the hill and setting the base of the building into it. I continued to merge them until there was no obvious place where nature ended and technology began (Fig.05).

I continued to paint shapes, starting from the largest and moving to the smaller elements. It was quite important to think about the size of the panels to help demonstrate the overall scale. I often bring in photos of forests and scale them down so the trees demonstrate the scale that I am trying to convey, which keeps everything consistent. Now that I had established the general image, I started adding more detail and natural features across the abandoned base.

It's interesting to observe real life and see how the process of aging affects abandoned architecture, military equipment or anything else for that matter. In this case I looked at what happens to metal when it remains in a rainy and humid environment, and how paint starts to wear and chip through the effects of weather and rust. This was taken into consideration for things like the rivets, panels, girders, as well as the main structural elements. I figured that I'd have to ►



07





08

divulge some more elements of the story by adding a few signs of disaster, such as holes in the shell of the building and black marks from the smoke of fires long extinguished (**Fig.06**).

Despite all this detail and noise, I made sure the overall shape was still easy to decipher. I kept adding photos in different layer modes, waiting for unexpected surprises or different effects that looked good. From the beginning I had the idea of adding cacti across the bottom plain, which was rewarding for me because having crazy

vegetation in places you might not find it on Earth gave the image an otherworldly feel. It also helped to break the horizontals and lead the eye around the image (**Fig.07**).

This is the whole trick behind concept art and good ideas; taking elements that you find in real life, and that are recognizable, and translating them into something we've never seen before. The two moons and the mountains also helped with this feeling.

The final touches were done to help make the image more epic. I added volumetric light coming from somewhere on the left side of the frame. This type of lighting allowed me to reinforce the edges and highlight the powerful shadowed silhouette (**Fig.08**). To make the viewer think more about the background story, I added huge, cable-like structures rising from the pillars to suggest a connection to another base up in the sky or even outside orbit. Then all that was left was to sign it and call it done! ●







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